GOOD MORNING AMERICA

CARL SANDBURG

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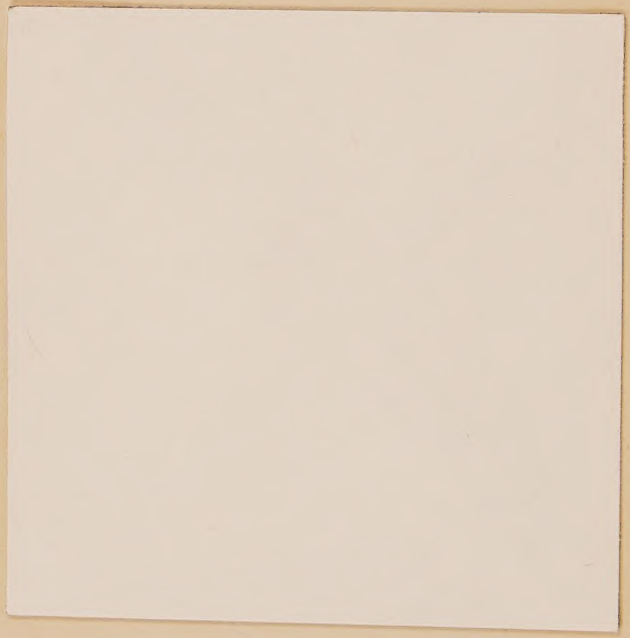

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Good morning, America

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GOOD MORNING, AMERICA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: THE PRAIRIE YEARS
THE AMERICAN SONGBAG

POEMS

SMOKE AND STEEL
SLABS OF THE SUNBURNT WEST
CHICAGO POEMS
CORNHUSKERS

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

ROOTABAGA STORIES
ROOTABAGA PIGEONS
ABE LINCOLN GROWS UP

GOOD MORNING, AMERICA

CARL SANDBURG

1928

HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

NEW YORK

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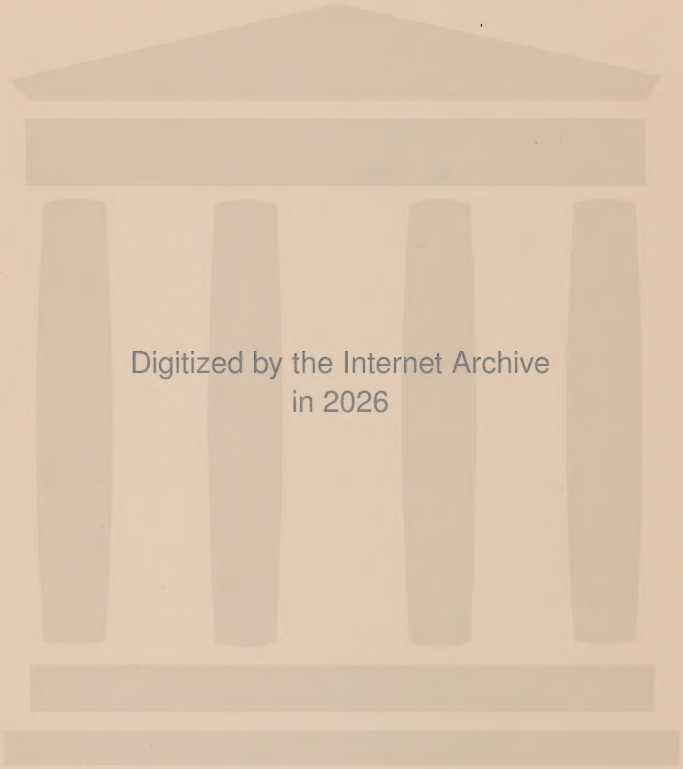
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TENTATIVE (FIRST MODEL)

DEFINITIONS OF POETRY

1 *Poetry is a projection across silence of cadences arranged to break that silence with definite intentions of echoes, syllables, wave lengths.*

2 *Poetry is an art practised with the terribly plastic material of human language.*

3 *Poetry is the report of a nuance between two moments, when people say, 'Listen!' and 'Did you see it?' 'Did you hear it? What was it?*

4 *Poetry is the tracing of the trajectories of a finite sound to the infinite points of its echoes.*

5 *Poetry is a sequence of dots and dashes, spelling depths, crypts, cross-lights, and moon wisps.*

6 *Poetry is a puppet-show, where riders of skyrockets and divers of sea fathoms gossip about the sixth sense and the fourth dimension.*

7 *Poetry is a plan for a slit in the face of a bronze fountain goat and the path of fresh drinking water.*

8 *Poetry is a slipknot tightened around a time-beat of one thought, two thoughts, and a last interweaving thought there is not yet a number for.*

9 *Poetry is an echo asking a shadow dancer to be a partner.*

10 *Poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly the air.*

11 *Poetry is a series of explanations of life, fading off into horizons too swift for explanations.*

12 *Poetry is a fossil rock-print of a fin and a wing, with an illegible oath between.*

13 *Poetry is an exhibit of one pendulum connecting with other and unseen pendulums inside and outside the one seen.*

14 *Poetry is a sky dark with a wild-duck migration.*

15 *Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable.*

16 *Poetry is any page from a sketchbook of outlines of a doorknob with thumb-prints of dust, blood, dreams.*

17 *Poetry is a type-font design for an alphabet of fun, hate, love, death.*

18 *Poetry is the cipher key to the five mystic wishes packed in a hollow silver bullet fed to a flying fish.*

19 *Poetry is a theorem of a yellow-silk handkerchief knotted with riddles, sealed in a balloon tied to the tail of a kite flying in a white wind against a blue sky in spring.*

20 *Poetry is a dance music measuring buck-and-wing follies along with the gravest and stateliest dead-marches.*

21 *Poetry is a sliver of the moon lost in the belly of a golden frog.*

22 *Poetry is a mock of a cry at finding a million dollars and a mock of a laugh at losing it.*

23 *Poetry is the silence and speech between a wet struggling root of a flower and a sunlit blossom of that flower.*

24 *Poetry is the harnessing of the paradox of earth cradling life and then entombing it.*

25 *Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during a moment.*

26 *Poetry is a fresh morning spider-web telling a story of moonlit hours of weaving and waiting during a night.*

27 *Poetry is a statement of a series of equations, with numbers and symbols changing like the changes of mirrors, pools, skies, the only never-changing sign being the sign of infinity.*

28 *Poetry is a pack-sack of invisible keepsakes.*

29 *Poetry is a section of river-fog and moving boat-lights, delivered between bridges and whistles, so one says, 'Oh!' and another, 'How?'*

30 *Poetry is a kinetic arrangement of static syllables.*

31 *Poetry is the arithmetic of the easiest way and the primrose path, matched up with foam-flanked horses, bloody knuckles, and bones, on the hard ways to the stars.*

32 *Poetry is a shuffling of boxes of illusions buckled with a strap of facts.*

33 *Poetry is an enumeration of birds, bees, babies, butterflies, bugs, bambinos, babayagas, and bipeds, beating their way up bewildering bastions.*

34 *Poetry is a phantom script telling how rainbows are made and why they go away.*

35 *Poetry is the establishment of a metaphorical link between white butterfly-wings and the scraps of torn-up love-letters.*

36 *Poetry is the achievement of the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits.*

37 *Poetry is a mystic, sensuous mathematics of fire, smokestacks, waffles, pansies, people, and purple sunsets.*

38 *Poetry is the capture of a picture, a song, or a flair, in a deliberate prism of words.*

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GOOD MORNING, AMERICA

GOOD MORNING, AMERICA

1

In the evening there is a sunset sonata comes to the cities.
There is a march of little armies to the dwindling of drums.
The skyscrapers throw their tall lengths of walls into black bastions on the red west.
The skyscrapers fasten their perpendicular alphabets far across the changing silver triangles of stars and streets.

And who made 'em? Who made the skyscrapers?
Man made 'em, the little two-legged joker, Man.
Out of his head, out of his dreaming, scheming skypiece,
Out of proud little diagrams that danced softly in his head—
Man made the skyscrapers.
With his two hands, with shovels, hammers, wheelbarrows, with engines, conveyors, signal whistles, with girders, molds, steel, concrete—
Climbing on scaffolds and falsework with blueprints, riding the beams and dangling in mid-air to call, Come on, boys—
Man made the skyscrapers.

When one tall skyscraper is torn down
To make room for a taller one to go up,
Who takes down and puts up those two skyscrapers?
Man . . . the little two-legged joker . . . Man.

2

"There's gold in them hills,"
Said old timers on their wagon seats.
And on the wagons was a scribble:
Pike's Peak or Bust.

The Rocky Mountains are stacked tall on the skyline.
Sunrise and dawns wash on the skyline every morning.
Sunset feathers of foam float red and fade pink.

And so,
Quite so,
Facts are facts, nailed down, fastened to stay.
And facts are feathers, foam, flying phantoms.
Niagara is a fact or a little bluebird cheeping in a flight over the Falls—
Chirping to itself: What have we here?
And how come?

The stone humps of old mountains
Sag and lift in a line to the sky.
The sunsets come with long shadowprints.
The six-cylinder go-getters ask:
What time is it?
Who were the Aztecs and the Zunis anyhow?
What do I care about Cahokia?
Where do we go from here?
What are the facts?

3

Facts stay fastened; facts are phantom.
An old one-horse plow is a fact.
A new farm tractor is a fact.
Facts stay fastened; facts fly with bird wings.
Blood and sweat are facts, and
The commands of imagination, the looks back and ahead,
The spirals, pivots, landing places, fadeaways,
The signal lights and dark stars of civilizations.

Now the head of a man, his eyes, are facts.
He sees in his head, as in looking glasses,
A cathedral, ship, bridge, railroad—a skyscraper—
And the plans are drawn, the blueprints fixed,
The design and the line, the shape written clear.
So fact moves from fact to fact, weaves, intersects.
Then come more, then come blood and sweat.
Then come pain and death, lifting and groaning,
And a crying out loud, between paydays.
Then the last ghost on the job walks.
The job stands up, the joined stresses of facts,
The cathedral, ship, bridge, railroad—the skyscraper—
Speaks a living hello to the open sky,
Stretches forth as an acknowledgement:
"The big job is done.
By God, we made it."
Facts stay fastened; facts fly with phantom bird wings.

4

I have looked over the earth and seen the swarming of different people to a different God—
White men with prayers to a white God, black men with prayers to a black God, yellow-faces before altars to a yellow-face God—
Amid burning fires they have pictured God with a naked skin; amid frozen rocks they have pictured God clothed and shaggy as a polar bear—
I have met stubs of men broken in the pain and mutilation of war saying God is forgetful and too far off, too far away—
I have met people saying they talk with God face to face; they tell God, hello God and how are you God; they get familiar with God and hold intimate conversations—
Yet I have met other people saying they are afraid to see God face to face for they would ask questions even as God might ask them questions.
I have seen these facts of God and man and anxious earthworms hunting for a home.

I have seen the facts of humble bees and scarlet butterflies, orioles and flickers, goldwing moths and pink ladybugs—
I have seen the spotted sunset sky filled with flights and wings—and I have heard high in the twilight blue the propellers of man and the evening air mail droning from Omaha to Chicago, droning across Iowa and Illinois—

I have said: The prints of many new wings, many fresh flights, many clean propellers, shall be on the sky before we understand God and the work of wings and air.

5

I have seen the figures of heroes set up as memorials, testimonies of fact—

Leif Ericson in a hard, deep-purple bronze, stands as a frozen shadow, lean, with searching eyes, on a hill in Wisconsin overlooking Lake Michigan—

Columbus in bronze is the center of a turmoil of traffic from world ends gathered on Manhattan Island—

Washington stands in marble shaped from life, in the old Romanesque temple on Capitol Hill, in Richmond, Virginia, with an arrogant laughter heard from circling skyscrapers—

Andrew Jackson in bronze on a bronze horse, a rocking horse on its hind legs with forepaws in the air, the tail brandishing, as the General lifts a cockade from his head in salutation to the citizens and soldiers of the Republic—

Ulysses S. Grant, somber and sober, is on a pony high in bronze listening to the endless white horses of Lake Michigan talking to Illinois—

Robert E. Lee, recumbent in white stone, sleeps a bivouac sleep in peace among loved ones of the southern Shenandoah Valley—

Lincoln's memory is kept in a living, arterial highway moving across state lines from coast to coast to the murmur, Be good to each other, sisters; don't fight, brothers.

6

And may we ask—is a flower a fact?
Shall a thin perishable blossom
Mount out of homeland soil
And give the breath of its leaves
For a memorial printed a few days,
For a symbol kept by the bees and the wind?
Shall each state pick its favorite flower
And say, This is Me, Us, this comes from the dirt of the earth, the loam, the mulch, this is a home greeting to our eyes, these leaves touch our footloose feet, our children and our children's children.
The blue cornflower along the railroad tracks in Illinois—
The pink moccasin hiding in the big woods of Minnesota—
The wild prairie rose scrambling along Iowa roads—
Golden poppy of California, giant cactus of Arizona—
Apple blossom of Michigan, Kentucky's trumpet vine—
The rhododendrons of Washington and West Virginia—
The Indian paintbrush of Wyoming, Montana's bitter root—
Vital and endless goldenrod crossing Nebraska—
Mariposa lily of Utah, pasque flower of South Dakota—
Ox-eyed daisy of North Carolina, Florida's orange blossom—

The magnolia of Louisiana, the Delaware peach blossom—
The silent laughing salutations of the Kansas sunflower—
The old buffalo clover, the marching Texas bluebonnet—
The pine cone and tassel of the lonesome State of Maine—
Shall these be among our phantom facts?

7

Facts are phantom; facts begin
With a bud, a seed, an egg.

A hero, a hoodlum, a little of both,
A toiling two-faced driven destiny,
Sleeps in the secret traceries of eggs.
If one egg could speak and answer the question,
Egg, who are you, what are you, where did you
come from and where are you going?
If one egg could break through the barriers, pass
all interference and tell that much, then we
could tell how the earth came—
how we came with hair, lungs, noses
to sit on the earth and eat our breakfasts,
to sleep with our mates
and to salute the moon between sleeps,
to meditate on worms in the dust
and how they fail to divulge the designs
of the dark autocracies of their fates.
Let one egg tell and we would understand a billion eggs.

The newborn child, dried behind the ears,
Swaddled in soft cloths and groping for nipples,
Comes from a payday of love so old,
So involved, so traced with circles of the moon,
So cunning with secrets of the salts of blood,
It must be older than the moon, older than the salt sea.
And do nations go back to the secret traceries of eggs?
To beginnings that fail to divulge the designs?
Can we say to the unborn, Egg, who are you? Egg, divulge your design.

Nations begin young the same as babies.
They suckle and struggle; they grow up;
They toil, fight, laugh, suffer, die.
They obey the traced circles of the moon.
They follow the ordained times of night, morning, afternoon, evening, and night again.
They stand up and have their day on the pavilion of the Four Winds.
The night sky of stars watches them begin, wear out, and fade away before newcomers, before silence, before empty pavilions.
They leave flags, slogans, alphabets, numbers, tools, tales of flaming performances; they leave moths, manuscripts, memories.

And so, to the pavilion of the four winds
Came the little one they called America,
One that suckled, struggled, toiled, laughed, grew.
America began young the same as a baby.
The little new republic had its swaddling cloths,

Its child shirt, its tussle to knit long bone joints.
And who can read the circle of its moons now?
And who shall tell beforehand the secrets of its
salts and blood?

8

Turn back and look at those men riding horses, sitting in saddles, smelling of leather, going to Boston, to Richmond, in velvet knickerbockers, in silk stockings, in slippers with silver buckles, white-powdered wigs on their heads, speaking of "the honor of a gentleman," singing "God rest ye, merry gentlemen," meeting carpenters who built staircases and gables with their hands, the work-day was sunup till sundown; they drove handwrought nails; the smoothing of their own hands was on their woodwork.

Look back; they are pinching their fingers in silver and gold snuff boxes, lifting tankards of ale, discussing titles to many miles of land, counties and townships of land; a gentleman rides all day to round his boundaries; and the jail doors cling to their brass locks holding the dregs, the convicts of debt.

Look back,
And that was long ago.
America was new born.
The republic was a baby, a child,

Fresh wiped behind the ears,
Blinking, tussling to knit the long
new bone joints.

Look back; there is an interlude; men in covered wagons, in buckskin, with plows, rifles, six-shooters, sweep west; the Havana cigar, the long pantaloons, the Mississippi steamboat, the talking wires, the iron horse.

Yes, there was an interlude.
Something happened, always something happens.
History is a living horse laughing at a wooden horse.
History is a wind blowing where it listeth.
History is no sure thing to bet on.
History is a box of tricks with a lost key.
History is a labyrinth of doors with sliding panels, a book of ciphers with the code in a cave of the Sargossa sea.
History says, if it pleases, Excuse me, I beg your pardon, it will never happen again if I can help it.

Yes, there was an interlude,
And phantoms washed their white shirts
Over and over again in buckets of blood—
And the saddest phantom of all stood up at Gettysburg
And tried to tell right from wrong and left the most of it unsaid, in the air.

The years go by with their numbers, names,
So many born, so many gone.
Again the Four Horsemen take their laughter.
Men walk on air and tumble from the sky.

Men grapple undersea and soak their bones along rust-brown, rust-flaked turbines on the sea bottom.
Men bite the dust from bullets, bombs, bayonets, gas,
Till ten million go west without time for a good-by,
Till double ten million are cripples for life,
Blind, shocked, broken storm children.
Boys singing Hinky Dinky Parley Voo
Come back from the oversea vortex,
From the barrages of No Man's Land,
Saying with gleams deep in their eyes,
"There is nothing to say, ask me no questions."

9

Steel, coal, oil, the test tube arise as facts, dominions,
Standing establishments with world ambassadors.
Between two seashores comes a swift interweaving of blood and bones, nerves and arteries, rail and motor paths, airways and airports, tunnels, wires, broadcasts on high and low frequencies to the receiving sets.
The train callers call All Aboard for transcontinental flyers; it is seaboard to seaboard; and the tincan tourists buy gas and follow the bird migrations.

The concrete highways crack under the incessant tires of two-ton, ten-ton trucks—and the concrete mixers come with laughing bellies filled with gravel for the repair jobs.
The talk runs—of the boll-weevil in the cotton, the doodle bug in the oil fields, the corn borer—of the lame duck

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in Congress, the farm bloc, the Ku Klux, a new sucker born every minute, sales canvass and selling spiels—

The talk runs—of crime waves, boy murderers, two women and a man, two men and a woman, bootleggers, the beer racket and the highjackers, gang fights, cloudbursts, tornadoes, floods, the Lakes-to-Gulf waterway, Boulder Dam—

The latest songs go from Broadway west across the country—the latest movies go from Hollywood east across the country—in a million homes they set their dials and listen to jazz numbers, the classics, the speech of the President in Washington, the heavyweight championship fight, the symphonies of the music masters.

10

Voices—telling mankind to look itself in the face—who are you? what are you? we'll tell you—here is the latest—this is what Man has done today on the pavilion of the four winds, on the arcs of the globe—

As the dusty red sun settles in the dayend the sport sheets blaze forth telling the box scores, the touchdowns, the scandals—pictures of dying champions, of new claimants, fresh aspirants calling challenges—of over-sea flyers, winners and losers—of new and old darlings of destiny—

Fate's crapshooters fading each other, big Dick or snake eyes, midnights and deuces, chicken one day and

feathers the next, the true story of how an ashcan
became a verandah and vice versa.

11

A code arrives; language; lingo; slang;
behold the proverbs of a people, a nation:
Give 'em the works. Fix it, there's always
a way. Be hard boiled. The good die young.

Be a square shooter. Be good; if you can't
be good be careful. When they put you in
that six foot bungalow, that wooden kimono,
you're through and that's that.

Sell 'em, sell 'em. Make 'em eat it. What
if we gyp 'em? It'll be good for 'em. Get their
names on the dotted line and give 'em the haha.

The higher they go the farther they drop.
The fewer the sooner. Tell 'em. Tell 'em.
Make 'em listen. They got to listen when
they know who you are. Don't let 'em know
what you got on your hip. Hit 'em where
they ain't. It's good for whatever ails
you and if nothing ails you it's good for
that. Where was you raised—in a barn?

They're a lot of muckers, tin horns; show
those slobs where they get off at. Tell 'em

you're going to open a keg of nails. Beat 'em to a fare-thee-well. Hand 'em the razz-berries. Clean 'em and then give 'em car-fare home. Maybe all you'll get from 'em you can put in your ear, anyhow.

They got a fat nerve to try to tie a can on you. Send 'em to the cleaners. Put the kibosh on 'em so they'll never come back. You don't seem to know four out of five have pyorrhea in Peoria.

Your head ain't screwed on wrong, I trust. Use your noodle, your nut, your think tank, your skypiece. God meant for you to use it. If they offer to let you in on the ground floor take the elevator.

Put up a sign: Don't worry; it won't last; nothing does. Put up a sign: In God we trust, all others pay cash. Put up a sign: Be brief, we have our living to make. Put up a sign: Keep off the grass.

Aye, behold the proverbs of a people:
The big word is Service.
Service—first, last and always.
Business is business.
What you don't know won't hurt you.
Courtesy pays.
Fair enough.
The voice with a smile.

Say it with flowers.
Let one hand wash the other.
The customer is always right.
Who's your boy friend?
Who's your girl friend?
O very well.
God reigns and the government at Washington lives.
Let it go at that.
There are lies, dam lies and statistics.
Figures don't lie but liars can figure.
There's more truth than poetry in that.
You don't know the half of it, dearie.
It's the roving bee that gathers the honey.[1]
A big man is a big man whether he's a president or a prizefighter.[2]
Name your poison.
Take a little interest.
Look the part.
It pays to look well.
Be yourself.
Speak softly and carry a big stick.[3]
War is hell.
Honesty is the best policy.
It's all in the way you look at it.
Get the money—honestly if you can.
It's hell to be poor.
Well, money isn't everything.

[1] On hearing from his father "A rolling stone gathers no moss," John L. Sullivan won one of his important early fights and telegraphed this reply.
[2] John L. Sullivan's greeting spoken to President Theodore Roosevelt in the White House.
[3] A Spanish proverb first Americanized by Theodore Roosevelt.

Well, life is what you make it.
Speed and curves—what more do you want?
I'd rather fly than eat.[4]
There must be pioneers and some of them get killed.[4]
The grass is longer in the backyard.[5]
Give me enough Swedes and snuff and I'll build a railroad to hell.[6]
How much did he leave? All of it.[7]
Can you unscramble eggs?[8]
Early to bed and early to rise and you never meet any prominent people.[9]
Let's go. Watch our smoke. Excuse our dust.
Keep your shirt on.

12

First come the pioneers, lean, hungry, fierce, dirty.
They wrangle and battle with the elements.
They gamble on crops, chills, ague, rheumatism.
They fight wars and put a nation on the map.
They battle with blizzards, lice, wolves.

[4] Charles A. Lindbergh.
[5] Based on a Republican campaign story in 1892 alleging that a man on all fours eating grass on the White House lawn told President Grover Cleveland, "I'm hungry" and was advised, "The grass is longer in the backyard."
[6] A saying that took rise from James J. (Jim) Hill.
[7] A folk tale in Chicago chronicles two ditch diggers on the morning after Marshall Field I died, leaving an estate of $150,000,000, as having this dialogue.
[8] J. Pierpont Morgan's query as to court decrees dissolving an inevitable industrial combination.
[9] George Ade.

They go on a fighting trail
To break sod for unnumbered millions to come.

Then the fat years arrive when the fat drips.
Then come the rich men baffled by their riches,
Bewildered by the silence of their tall possessions.
Then come the criers of the ancient desperate taunt:
Stuff your guts
and strut your stuff,
strut it high and handsome;
when you die you're dead
and there's no come-back
and not even the winds
will say your name—
feed, oh pigs, feed, oh swine.

Old timer, dust of the earth so kindly,
Old timer, dirt of our feet and days.
Old time gravel and gumbo of the earth,
Take them back kindly,
These pigs, these swine.
The bones of them and their brothers blanch to the same yellow of the years.

13

Since we sell the earth with a fence around it,
Since one man sells the ocean to another and guarantees a new roof and all modern conveniences,
Since we sell everything but the blue sky and only the Blue Sky Laws stop us selling that,

Since we sell justice, since we sell pardons for crimes,
Since we sell land titles, oil claims, ninety-nine year options, all day suckers and two minute eggs—
Since we have coined a slogan, Never give the sucker an even break and the Old Army Game goes—
Since the selling game is the big game and unless you know how to sell you're a bum and that ain't all—
Since the city hicks and the hicks from the sticks go to the latest Broadway hit hoping to fix their glims on a birdie with her last feather off in a bathtub of booze—
Let the dance go on—let the stalking stuffed cadavers of old men run the earth and call up the Four Horsemen. . . .

14

Now it's Uncle Sam sitting on top of the world.
Not so long ago it was John Bull and, earlier yet, Napoleon and the eagles of France told the world where to get off at.
Spain, Rome, Greece, Persia, their blunderbuss guns, their spears, catapults, ships, took their turn at leading the civilizations of the earth—
One by one they were bumped off, moved over, left behind, taken for a ride; they died or they lost the wallop they used to pack, not so good, not so good.
One by one they no longer sat on top of the world—now the Young Stranger is Uncle Sam, is America and the song goes, "The stars and stripes forever!" even though "forever" is a long time.

Even though the oldest kings had their singers and clowns calling, "Oh king, you shall live forever."

15

In God we trust; it is so written.
The writing goes onto every silver dollar.
The fact: God is the great One who made us all.
We is you and me and all of us in the United States of America.
And trusting God means we give ourselves, all of ourselves, the whole United States of America, to God, the great One.
Yes . . . perhaps . . . is that so?

16

The silent litany of the workmen goes on—
Speed, speed, we are the makers of speed.
We make the flying, crying motors,
Clutches, brakes, and axles,
Gears, ignitions, accelerators,
Spokes and springs and shock absorbers.
The silent litany of the workmen goes on—
Speed, speed, we are the makers of speed;
Axles, clutches, levers, shovels,
We make the signals and lay the way—
Speed, speed.

The trees come down to our tools.
We carve the wood to the wanted shape.
The whining propeller's song in the sky,
The steady drone of the overland truck,
Comes from our hands; us; the makers of speed.

Speed; the turbines crossing the Big Pond,
Every nut and bolt, every bar and screw,
Every fitted and whirling shaft,
They came from us, the makers,
Us, who know how,
Us, the high designers and the automatic feeders,
Us, with heads,
Us, with hands,
Us, on the long haul, the short flight,
We are the makers; lay the blame on us—
The makers of speed.

17

There is a Sleepwalker
goes walking and talking—
I promise you nothing, there are too many promises.
I bring you a package so little, so thin, you can hide it anywhere, in your shoes, in your ear, in a corner of your heart.
I bring you a handkerchief, so filmy a gauze of silk, so foamy a fabric, you pick it up and put it away as you put away a bubble, a morning cobweb in the sun, a patch of moon dropped from two lilacs.

I bring you gold, beaten so thin with so many little hammers it is thinner than the morning laughter of hummingbirds flitting among diamond dewdrops yet hard as an anvil wearing out the strongest hammers.

There is a Sleepwalker
goes walking and talking—

Go alone and away from all books, go with your own heart into the storm of human hearts and see if somewhere in that storm there are bleeding hearts, sacred hearts taking a bitter wages of doom, red-soaked and crimson-plunged hearts of the Redeemer of Man.

Walk by yourself and find the silence where a whisper of your lips is the same as a pounding and a shouting at the knobs and panels of great doors.

Walk again where the mass human shadows foregather, where the silhouettes and pantomimes of the great human procession wind with a crying out loud, and rotten laughters mix with raging tumults—

And between the being born and the being dead of the generations they march, march, march, to the drums, drums, drums, of the three facts of arriving, living, departing—

Go where the shadows string from winding pilgrim cohorts, where the line of the march twists and reels, and a hundred years is nothing much and a thousand or a million years nothing much, as they march, march, march, to the drums, drums, drums, of the three facts.

Go there and let your heart be soft, fading as rainbows on slants of rain in the sun: let your heart be full of riddles as white steel and its blue shadows.

There is a Sleepwalker
goes walking and talking—

We are afraid. What are we afraid of?
We are afraid of what we are afraid of.
We are afraid of this, that, these, those, them.
We are afraid the earth will blow up and bomb the human family out of its sleep, its slumber, its sleepwalking, its pass and repass of shadows.
We are afraid the sky will come apart and fall on us and in a rain of stars we will wash out into the Great Alone, the Deep Dark, saying, "Good-bye old Mother Earth, we always were afraid of you."
We are afraid; what are we afraid of? We are afraid of nothing much, nothing at all, nothing in the shape of god, man or beast, we can eat any ashes offered us, we can step out before the fact of the Fact of Death and look it in the eye and laugh, "You are the begining or the end of something, I'll gamble with you, I'll take a chance."

18

And we, us, the people,
We who of course are no sleepwalkers,
Perhaps we may murmur—
Perhaps as the airmen slip into their leather coats,
Gambling for the time tables as against the skull and cross-bones,

Riding with mail sacks across orange blossoms, the desert cactus, the Rockies, the Great Plains, the Mississippi, the corn belt, the Appalachians,

Riding with mail sacks, with a clutch on the steering wheels in storms and stars, with a passing cry, "Good luck and God bless you,"

Perhaps while they ride and gamble on the new transcontinental sky paths, perhaps we may ask and murmur—

Good morning, America.
Good morning, Mr. Who, Which, What.
Good morning, let's all of us tell our real names.
Good morning, Mr. Somebody, Nobody, Anybody-who-is-Anybody-at-all.
Good morning, Worms in the Dust, Eagles in the Air, Climbers to the Top of the Sky.

19

You have kissed good-by to one century, one little priceless album.

You will yet kiss good-by to ten, twenty centuries. Ah! you shall have such albums!

Your mothers, America, have labored and carried harvests of generations—

Across the spillways come further harvests, new tumultuous populations, young strangers, crying, "We are here! We belong! look at us!"

Good morning, America!
Morning goes as morning-glories go!
High noon goes, afternoon goes!
Twilight, sundown, gloaming—
The hour of writing: Good night, America!
Good night, sleep, peace, and sweet dreams!

20

The prints of many new ships shall be on the sky.
The Four Horsemen shall ride again in a bitter dust,
The granaries of great nations shall be the food of fat rats,
And the shooting stars shall write new alphabets on the sky
Before we come home,
Before we understand.

Off in our western sky,
Off in a burning maroon,
Shall come in a wintrish haze,
Shall come in points and crystals—
A shovel of stars.

Let us wigwag the moon.
Let us make new propellers,
Go past old spent stars
And find blue moons on a new star path.

Let us make pioneer prayers.
Let working clothes be sacred.

Let us look on
And listen in
On God's great workshop
Of stars . . . and eggs . . .

There shall be—
Many many girls in a wild windy moonlight,
Many many mothers carrying babies.

21

Sea sunsets, give us keepsakes.
Prairie gloamings, pay us for prayers.
Mountain clouds on bronze skies—
    Give us great memories.
Let us have summer roses.
Let us have tawny harvest haze in pumpkin time.
Let us have springtime faces to toil for and play for.
Let us have the fun of booming winds on long waters.
Give us dreamy blue twilights—of winter evenings—to wrap us in a coat of dreaminess.
Moonlight, come down—shine down, moonlight—meet every bird cry and every song calling to a hard old earth, a sweet young earth.

SPRING GRASS

SPRING GRASS

Spring grass, there is a dance to be danced
for you.
Come up, spring grass, if only for young feet.
Come up, spring grass, young feet ask you.

Smell of the young spring grass,
You're a mascot riding on the wind horses.
You came to my nose and spiffed me. This is
your lucky year.

Young spring grass just after the winter,
Shoots of the big green whisper of the year,
Come up, if only for young feet.
Come up, young feet ask you.

MOIST MOON PEOPLE

The moon is able to command the valley tonight.
The green mist shall go a-roaming, the white river shall
go a-roaming.
Yet the moon shall be commanding, the moon shall take a
high stand on the sky.

When the cats crept up the gullies,
And the goats fed at the rim a-laughing,
When the spiders swept their rooms in the burr oaks,
And the katydids first searched for this year's accordions,
And the crickets began a-looking for last year's concer-
tinas—

I was there, I saw that hour, I know God had grand
intentions about it.
If not, why did the moon command the valley, the green
mist and white river go a-roaming, and the moon by
itself take so high a stand on the sky?
If God and I alone saw it, the show was worth putting on,
Yet I remember others were there, Amos and Priscilla,
Axel and Hulda, Hank and Jo, Big Charley and
Little Morningstar,
They were all there; the clock ticks spoke with castanet
clicks.

SPRING CRIES

1

Call us back, call us with your sliding silver,
Frogs of the early spring, frogs of the later days
When spring crosses over, when spring spills over
And spills the last of its sliding silvers
Into the running wind, the running water, of summer.
Call us back then, call over, call under—only call—
Frogs of the early spring, frogs of the later days.

2

Birds we have seen and known and counted,
Birds we have never learned the names of,
Call us back, you too, call us back.
Out of the forks and angles of branches,
High out of the blacksmith arms of oak and ash,
Sweet out of the Lombardy poplar's arrow head,
Soft out of the swinging, swaying,
The bending and almost broken branch
Of the bush of the home of the wild gooseberry—
Yellow feather, white throat, gray neck, red wing,
Scarlet head, blue shoulder, copper silver body line—
All you birds—call us back—call us under, over—
Birds we know, birds we never can know,
Birds spilling your one-two-three
Of a slur and a cry and a trill—
Call us back, you too call us.

3

Warble us easy and old ones.
Open your gates up the sunset in the evening.
Lift up your windows of song in the morning lights.
Wind on your spiral and zigzag ways.
Birds, we have heard baskets of you, bushes of you.
In a tree of a hundred windows ten of you sat
On the song sills of every window.
Warble us easy and old ones now.
Call us back, spill your one-two-three
Of a slur and a cry and a trill.

FROG SONGS

The silver burbles of the frogs wind and swirl.
The lines of their prongs swing up in a spray.
They cut the air with bird line curves.
The eye sees nothing, the ear is filled, the head remembers
The beat of the swirl of frog throat silver prongs
In the early springtime when eggs open, when feet learn,
When the crying of the water begins a new year.

LUMBER YARD POOLS AT SUNSET

The rain pools in the old lumber yard
change as the sky changes.

No sooner do lightfoot sunset maroons
cross the west than they cross the rain
pools too.

So now every blue has a brother
and every singing silver a sister.

SPRING CARRIES SURPRISES

Be gay now.
Shadows go fast these days
Unlocking the locks of blossoms.

The lilacs never know how,
The oleanders along the old walls,
The peach trees over the hills—
Out of the lock-ups they go,
Out and crying with leaves.
They never know how.
Be gay—this is the time.

The little keys of the climbing runners,
The opening of the doors again,
The letting loose of the shut-ins—
Here is the time—be gay now.

Ask spring why.
Ask in your heart why.
Go around gay and foolish asking why.
God be easy on your fool heart
If you don't go around asking spring
In your heart, "Why, why, why,"
    Three times like that, or else
    One long, "Why?"

Be gay now.

MORE COUNTRY PEOPLE

The six pigs at the breast of their mother
Equal six spots of young brown against a big spot of old
brown.
The bleating of the sheep was an arithmetic
Of the long wool coats thick after winter.

The collar of white hair hung on the neck of the black hog,
The roosters of the Buff Cochin people strutted.

Cherry branches stuck their blossoms against the sky.
Elbows joined elbows of white blossoms.
Zigzags blent into a mass.
"Look once at us—today is the day we call today."

SPRING WIND

Be flip with us if you want to, spring wind.
Be gay and make us sniff at your slow secrets.
Be easy with us, spring wind.
Be lovely and yet be lovely not too fast with us.

If a child came crying out of a snowstorm
And sat down with secrets of new playthings,
Crying because lovelier things than ever came that year—

If a child came crying out of sheet ice,
A white carving of a lithe running torso,
Holding in its hands new baffling playthings—

If a child came crying so,
Wet and smiling, smelling of promises
Of yellow roses blowing in the river backwashes,
Potato blossoms across the prairie flat lands,
And even so much as one new honest song to sing—

If a child came so,
We would say, 'Come and sit on our back porch;
Listen with us and tell us more, tell us all you know;
Tell us the secrets of the spring wind;
Tell us if this is a lucky year;
Be lovely and yet be lovely not too fast with us.'

CRISSCROSS

Spring crosses over into summer.
This is as it always was.

Buds on the redhaw, beetles in the loam,
And the interference of the green leaves
At the blue roofs of the spring sky
Crossing over into summer—
These are ways, this is out and on.
This always was.

The tumble out and the push up,
The breaking of the little doors,
The look again at the mother sun,
The feel of the blue roofs over—
This is summer? This always was?

The whispering sprigs of buds stay put.
The spiders are after the beetles.
The farmer is driving a tractor turning furrows.
The hired man drives a manure spreader.
The oven bird hops in dry leaves.
The woodpecker beats his tattoo.
Is this it? Is spring crossing over?
Is it summer? And this always was?
The whispering pinks, the buds on the redhaw,
The blue roofs of the sky . . . stay put.

BABY SONG OF THE FOUR WINDS

Let me be your baby, south wind.
Rock me, let me rock, rock me now.
Rock me low, rock me warm.
Let me be your baby.

Comb my hair, west wind.
Comb me with a cow lick.
Or let me go with a pompadour.
Come on, west wind, make me your baby.

North wind, shake me where I'm foolish.
Shake me loose and change my ways.
Cool my ears with a blue sea wind.
I'm your baby, make me behave.

And you, east wind, what can I ask?
A fog comfort? A fog to tuck me in?
Fix me so and let me sleep.
I'm your baby—and I always was.

BLOSSOM THEMES

1

Late in the winter came one day
When there was a whiff on the wind,
a suspicion, a cry not to be heard
of perhaps blossoms, perhaps green
grass and clean hills lifting roll-
ing shoulders.
Does the nose get the cry of spring
first of all? is the nose thankful
and thrilled first of all?

2

If the blossoms come down
so they must fall on snow
because spring comes this year
before winter is gone,
then both snow and blossoms look sad;
peaches, cherries, the red summer apples,
all say it is a hard year.
The wind has its own way of picking off
the smell of peach blossoms and then
carrying that smell miles and miles.
Women washing dishes in lonely farmhouses
stand at the door and say, "Something is
happening."

A little foam of the summer sea
    of blossoms,
    a foam finger of white leaves,
    shut these away—
    high into the summer wind runners.
Let the wind be white too.

SMALL HOMES

The green bug sleeps in the white lily ear.
The red bug sleeps in the white magnolia.
Shiny wings, you are choosers of color.
You have taken your summer bungalows wisely.

CORN BELT

SHE OPENS THE BARN DOOR EVERY MORNING

Open the barn door, farm woman,
It is time for the cows to be milked.
Their udders are full from the sleep night.
Open the door with your right hand shuttling a cleat,
Your left hand pulling a handle.
The smell of the barn is let out to the pastures.
Dawn lets itself in at the open door.
A cow left out in the barnyard all the night
Looks on as though you do this every morning.
Open the barn door, farm woman, you do it
As you have done it five hundred times.
As a sleep woman heavy with the earth,
Clean as a milk pail washed in the sun,
You open the barn door a half mile away
And a cow almost turns its head and looks on.

MILK WHITE MOON, PUT THE COWS TO SLEEP

Milk-white moon, put the cows to sleep.
Since five o'clock in the morning,
Since they stood up out of the grass,
Where they slept on their knees and hocks,
They have eaten grass and given their milk
And eaten grass again and given milk,
And kept their heads and teeth at the earth's face.
Now they are looking at you, milk-white moon.
Carelessly as they look at the level landscapes,
Carelessly as they look at a pail of new white milk,
They are looking at you, wondering not at all, at all,
If the moon is the skim face top of a pail of milk,
Wondering not at all, carelessly looking.
Put the cows to sleep, milk-white moon,
Put the cows to sleep.

SLOW PROGRAM

The iron rails run into the sun.
The setting of the sun chooses an hour.
The red rail ribbons run into the red ball sun.
The ribbons and the ball change like red water lights.
The picture floats with a slow program of red haze lights.

FIELD PEOPLE

In the morning eyes of the brown-eyed Susans,
in the toadflax sheaves smiling butter-and-eggs,
in the white mushrooms sprung from air into air
since yesterday morning, since yesterday evening,
in the corn row corridor walls of cornstalks—
the same southwest wind comes again, knowing—

How the field people go away,
the corn row people, the toadflax, mushroom,
thistlebloom people,
how they rise, sing songs they learn, and then go away,
leaving in the air no last will and testament at all,
leaving no last whisper at all on how this sister,
that brother, those friends, such and such a sweetheart
is remembered with a gold leaf, a cup rainbow home,
a cricket's hut for counting its summer heartbeats,
a caught shimmer of one haunted moonray to be passed on—
the running southwest wind knows them all.

SUNSETS

There are sunsets who whisper a good-by.
It is a short dusk and a way for stars.
Prairie and sea rim they go level and even
And the sleep is easy.

There are sunsets who dance good-by.
They fling scarves half to the arc,
To the arc then and over the arc.
Ribbons at the ears, sashes at the hips,
Dancing, dancing good-by. And here sleep
Tosses a little with dreams.

GRASSROOTS

Grass clutches at the dark dirt with finger holds.
Let it be blue grass, barley, rye or wheat,
Let it be button weed or butter-and-eggs,
Let it be Johnny-jump-ups springing clean blue streaks.
Grassroots down under put fingers into dark dirt.

CANADIANS AND POTTAWATTOMIES

I have seen a loneliness sit
in the dark and nothing lit up.
I have seen a loneliness sit
in the dark lit up like a Christ-
mas tree, a Hallowe'en pumpkin.

If two Canadians understand snow
they are then both Canadians.
If one Canadian understands snow
and another doesn't understand
snow at all, then one is a Canadian
and the other is no Canadian at all.

The Pottawattomie Indians sang something
like this in their early winter songs.
They sang it digging holes in the ice to
let down fish-hooks, they chattered it in
the wigwams when blizzards shook the wigwams.

CORN AND BEANS

Having looked long at two garden rows
And seen how the rain and dirt have used them
I have decided the corn and beans shall have names.

And one is to be known as the Thwarted Corn of a Short Year
While the other shall be called the Triumphant Beans of Plenty Rain.

If I change these names next Sunday I shall let you know about it.

MOCKERS GO TO KANSAS IN SPRING

Riding from Topeka, Kansas, to Manhattan, Kansas,
Marco saw and heard three mockingbirds.
He mentioned it to the Kansas Authors' Club.
Two mockers were heard that night in Manhattan.
A man from Chicago sleeping in the Gillett House
Heard one of the mockers before breakfast the morning after.
This is evidence, testimony, offered in behalf of those who do not understand how mockers roam north from Texas and Arkansas, sometimes as far north as Manhattan, Kansas.

BIRD TALK

And now when the branches were beginning to be heavy,
It was the time when they once had said, "This is the beginning of summer."
The shrilling of the frogs was not so shrill as in the first weeks after the broken winter;
The birds took their hops and zigzags a little more anxious; a home is a home; worms are worms.
The yellow spreads of the dandelions and buttercups reached across the green pastures.
Tee whee and *tee whee* came on the breezes, and the grackles chuzzled their syllables.
And it was the leaves with a strong soft wind over them that talked most of all and said more than any others though speaking the fewest words.
It was the green leaves trickling out the gaunt nowhere of winter, out on the gray hungry branches—
It was the leaves on the branches, beginning to be heavy, who said as they said one time before, "This is the beginning of summer."

We shall never blame the birds who come
where the river and the road make the Grand Crossing
and talk there, sitting in circles talking bird talk.
If they ask in their circles as to who is here
and as to who is not here and who used to be here,
Or if instead of counting up last year as against
this year, they count up this year as against next

year, and have their bird chatter about who is here
this year who won't be here next year,
We shall never blame the birds.

If I have put your face among leaf faces, child,
Or if I have put your voice among bird voices,
Blame me no more than the bluejays.

KANSAS LESSONS

Often the mockingbird is only a mocker
singing the songs of other birds,
pouring their trills over the bushes.
    And sometimes the mocker is all alone
    the child playing all-aloney all—aloney.
And sometimes the mocker calls, calls, calls,
the fables, texts and cries of all heartbreaks,
all the wild nights a blood gold moon can buy.

CRICKET MARCH

As the corn becomes higher
The one shrill of a summer cricket
Becomes two and ten
With a shrilling surer than last month.

As the banners of the corn
Come to their highest flying in the wind,
The summer crickets come to a marching army.

SUMMER GRASS

Summer grass aches and whispers.

It wants something; it calls and sings; it pours
out wishes to the overhead stars.

The rain hears; the rain answers; the rain is slow
coming; the rain wets the face of the grass.

NOCTURN CABBAGE

Cabbages catch at the moon.
It is late summer, no rain, the pack of the soil
cracks open, it is a hard summer.
In the night the cabbages catch at the moon, the
leaves drip silver, the rows of cabbages are
series of little silver waterfalls in the moon.

CRABAPPLES

Sweeten these bitter wild crabapples, Illinois October sun. The roots here came from the wilderness, came before man came here. They are bitter as the wild is bitter.

Give these crabapples your softening gold, October sun, go through to the white wet seeds inside and soften them black. Make these bitter apples sweet. They want you, sun.

The drop and the fall, the drop and the fall, the apples leaving the branches for the black earth under, they know you from last year, the year before last year, October sun.

POPLAR AND ELM

Silver leaves of the last of summer,
Poplar and elm silver leaves,
Leaves not least of all of the Lombardy poplar,
Standing before the autumn moon and the autumn wind
as a woman waits in a doorway for some one who
must be coming,
All you silver leaf people, you I have seen and heard
in a hundred summer winds,
It is October, it is a week, two weeks, till the rain and frost
break on us and the leaves are washed off, washed
down.
In January when the trees fork gray against a clear winter
blue in the spare sun silver of winter or the lengthened
frost silver of the long nights—
I shall remember then the loans of the sun to you in June,
I shall remember the hundred winds who kissed you.

BROWN GOLD

The time of the brown gold comes softly.
Oat shocks are alive in brown gold belts,
the short and the shambling oat shocks
sit on the stubble and straw.
The timothy hay, the fodder corn, the cabbage
and the potatoes, across their leaves are
footsteps.
There is a bold green up over the cracks in
the corn rows where the crickets go criss-
cross errands, where the bugs carry pack-
ages.
Flutter and whirr, you birdies, you newcomers
in lines and sashes, tellers of harvest
weather on the way, belts of brown gold
coming softly.
It is very well the old time streamers take
up the old time gold haze against the west-
ern timber line.
It is the old time again when months and birds
tell each other, "Oh, very well," and repeat it
where the fields and the timber lines meet
in belts of brown gold hazes, "Oh, very
well, Oh, very well."

RIPE CORN

The wind blows. The corn leans. The corn leaves go rustling. The march time and the windbeat is on October drums. The stalks of fodder bend all one way, the way the last windstorm passed.

"Put on my winter clothes; get me an ulster; a yellow ulster to lay down in January and shut my eyes and cover my ears in snow drifts."

The wind blows. The corn leans. The fodder is russet. October says to the leaves, "Rustle now to the last lap, to the last leg of the year."

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AUBURN

Auburn autumn leaves, will you come back?
Auburn autumn oaks, foxprints burning soft,
burning the oaken autumn coats, burning
the auburn autumn fire—
How can you burn so, how can you go on with
all this burning, and bring back more to
burn next year?
Ask and let go, lift this burning of this year
so much like last year's burning; let next
year's burning come; ask; let go.
The burnings of the auburn autumn leaves, the
slow burnt foxprints of the oaken auburns,
house of leaves and branches, house of leaves
to burn and branches to be here in the
white howling, the white quiet of winter—
Going so, going so, auburn house-roof of eaves and
leaves, the child and the old man, the child and
the old woman shoot a good-by to you.

The tall old man with clean bones, clean-shape toes
counting ten against the bed footboard—
This is the tall old man telling a son with clean
bones a passover auburn and oaken secret—
There are fall leaves, foxprint burnings, this year,
last year, next year, in all houses, and
Most of all in the house of the tall old man with
clean bones, clean-shape toes counting ten against
the bed footboard.

In all houses are leaves burnt and burning, in all houses branches to be here in the white howling, the patched black quiet of winter.

REDHAW RAIN

The red rain spatter under the redhaw tree, the hut roof branches of the redhaw tree, the floor level loam under the redhaw tree, the meeting place of the fall red rain and the loam of the first fall frost—the Pottawattamies took this into their understanding of why October so seldom fails, why October so often brings the red rain spatter under the redhaw tree.

The slow rain soaks. The farmers fix wagon axles, patch the barn roof shingles, peek in the thatch of the empty swallow homes. The farm wives keep to the kitchens cleaning pans. The slow rain soaks.

The head at the end of a horse's neck holds its bone and meat, teeth and eyeballs, tongue and ears, to the west, to the east, to the browse of the last of the sweetgrass range this year. Snow comes soon, out of the north, to the south and south. The tongue of the head in the sweetgrass knows.

The grey west opens for a spear of blue
longer than fifty, a hundred and fifty,
prairie miles.

The grey west opens a triangle silver,
an arch of bar clouds over the prairie.

And the sun washes the spear, the arch,
the triangle, over and over.

WITHOUT NOTICE BEFOREHAND

The frozen rain of the first November days
came down without notice beforehand
the same as the wind and the frost
loosening the leaves of the buckeye tree,
dropping a yellow rain of flat swirling leaves,
all without notice beforehand, came down,
the same as the far hiding out of lady bugs,
woggle bugs spotted black polka dots
on box car red, on banana yellow,
the same as this going away of the bug families
all went on without notice beforehand.

Under the hedgethorn tree the bugs got together,
families from many directions; they dappled
the dark soil and made a red weather
of the Indian summer afternoon among thorns;
if a man should live a day for every bug
with a paint of box car red, a lamp shade red
on his back, a man would live many years
counting a day for a bug under the Indian summer
hedgethorn afternoon; the farmers husked their
corn in old fashioned Studebaker wagons;
the cream and gold corn ears sent a shine
between the green wagon boards, over the tops
of the green wagon boards; so the bug families
held a pow wow, making a red weather
among thorns in sun patches of Indian summer;
it seemed to be all in a bug family lifetime

coming as it did with no warnings ahead,
no shadow line to tell how soon or late
the frozen rain of the first November days,
coming without notice beforehand.

The buckeye built itself a house of gold and black,
the green leaf roof, the green leaf walls of summer
belted their eaves with bucklers of gold,
changed their arches and let the rich glooms
of the black inside rafters play out;
the shine was loam crossing its heart with gold,
the running out of russet and cream yellow
on the loam black of the forks of the branches
was a sign of summer people leaving
the house the buckeye built itself; and this too
came with no warnings ahead, no shadow line
of the frozen rain of the first November days
coming without notice beforehand.

CORN PRATTLINGS

The wind came across the corn laughing.
It was late in summer, the limit of summer,
The deadline of early fall time,
And the wind in the laughing corn,
The wind came across.

The wind ran on the tops of the corntossels,
And the pointed long leaves hung over,
Hands obedient to the wind.
And the wind ran once and again for each leaf,
Each pointed long leaf, the wind sang running
Across the corntossels and leaves of corn.

There is a floor the corn grows on,
The roots of the corn go under and twist and hold.
The trunk of the corn stands over the floor,
The leaf and the corntossel signal our winds
And take notice of the path of the sun.

The ears laugh in the husks now.
The big job of the year is done.
It's all over again till next year.
Out of maroon silk and fading greens,
Up over the wandering pumpkin stems,
The yellow and gold kernels laugh.
The big job is over and the laugh of the yellow ears
And the laugh of the running wind go together.
They come across together now late, late, in summer
Early in the fall time of the corntossels.

HAZE GOLD

Sun, you may send your haze gold
Filling the fall afternoon
With a flimmer of many gold feathers.
Leaves, you may linger in the fall sunset
Like late lingering butterflies before frost.
Treetops, you may sift the sunset cross-lights
Spreading a loose checkerwork of gold and shadow.
Winter comes soon—shall we save this, lay it by,
Keep all we can of these haze gold yellows?

WINTER GOLD

The same gold of summer was on the winter hills,
the oat straw gold, the gold of slow sun change.

The stubble was chilly and lonesome,
The stub feet clomb up the hills and stood.

The flat cry of one wheeling crow faded and came,
ran on the stub gold flats and faded and came.

Fade-me, find-me, slow lights rang their changes
on the flats of oat straw gold on winter hills.

MAROON WITH SILVER FROST

Whispers of maroon came on the little river.
The slashed hill took up the sunset,
Took up the evening star.
The brambles crackled in a fire call
To the beginnings of frost.
"It is almost night," the maroon whispered
in widening blood rings on the little river.
"It is night," the sunset, the evening star
said later over the hump of the slashed hill.
"What if it is?" the brambles crackled across
the sure silver beginnings of frost.

CORNFIELD RIDGE AND STREAM

The top of the ridge is a cornfield.
It rests all winter under snow.
It feeds the broken snowdrifts in spring
To a clear stream cutting down hill to the river.
Late in summer the stream dries; rabbits run and
birds hop along the dry mud bottom.
Fall time comes and it fills with leaves; oaks and
shagbark hickories drop their summer hats,
ribbons, handkerchiefs.
"This is how I keep warm all winter," the stream
murmurs, waiting till the snowdrifts melt and
the ice loosens and the clear singing babble
of spring comes back.

ON A RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY

Stream, go hide yourself.
In the tall grass, in the cat tails,
In the browns of autumn, the last purple
asters, the yellow whispers.
On the moss rock levels leave the marks
of your wave-lengths.
Sing in your gravel, in your clean gully.
Let the moaning railroad trains go by.
Till they stop you, go on with your song.

The minnies spin in the water gravel,
In the spears of the early autumn sun.
There must be winter fish.
Babies, you will be jumping fish
In the first snow month.

SO TO SPEAK

Dreams, graves, pools, growing
flowers, cornfields—these are
silent, so to speak.

Northwest blizzards, sea rocks
apounding in high wind, southeast
sleet after a thaw—these are heard,
so to speak.

VALLEY MIST

SILVER POINT

The silver point of an evening star
dropping toward the hammock of new moon
over Lake Okoboji, over prairie waters in Iowa,—
it was framed in the lights just after twilight.

MIST MARCHES ACROSS THE VALLEY

Mist marches across the valley.
Down a long slope the mist marches
And then up a long slope the mist marches
And kingdoms, armies, guns, magic of bookmen, axmen,
The mist marches through them all, gathers them all
And goes to the next valley, goes to the next night,
Goes to the next lookers-on, gathers them all,
Gathers valleys, nights, lookers-on.

Come on down the valley: come on, oh mist.
Whiten us with some of your white.
Show us your gift, your great gift, your white gift
Of gathering all, gathering kingdoms, armies, guns,
Magic of bookmen, axmen, gathering valleys, nights,
lookers-on.
Whiten us, oh mist, whiten us with some of this strong soft
white of yours.

METHUSALEH SAW MANY REPEATERS

Methusaleh was a witness to many cabbages and kings,
Many widows of the sod and many grass widows,
Many a mother-in-law, many a triangle of one woman and two men or one man and two women,
Many who died hungry and crying for their babies, many who died hungry and no babies at all to cry for.

Methusaleh must have lived eight hundred years or a thousand or two hundred years.
Methusaleh was an old man when he died and you if you see what Methusaleh saw,
You will be an old man or an old woman when you die.

Repeat it: Methusaleh saw many cabbages and kings, he was a witness, a looker-on like me, like you.
Repeat it: Methusaleh was an old man, he saw much before he was through, and you or I, if we see what Methusaleh saw, if we see it all before we are through,
You and I will be old, old as Methusaleh, old with our looking on at cabbages and kings, widows of the sod and the grass, triangles, and people with babies to cry for and no babies at all to cry for.
Repeat it: Methusaleh was a witness of repeating figures, sea patterns in the sea sand, land patterns of the land wind, Methusaleh was a witness, a looker-on like me, like you.

SKETCH OF A POET

He wastes time walking and telling the air, "I am superior even to the wind."

On several proud days he has addressed the wide circumambient atmosphere, "I am the wind myself."

He has poet's license 4-11-44; he got it even before writing of those "silver bugs that come on the sky without warning every evening."

He stops for the buzzing of bumblebees on bright Tuesdays in any summer month; he performs with a pencil all alone among dun cat-tails, amid climbing juniper bushes, notations rivaling the foot tracks of anxious spiders; he finds mice homes under beach logs in the sand and pursues inquiries on how the mice have one room for bed-room, dining-room, sitting-room and how they have no front porch where they sit publicly and watch passers-by.

He asks himself, "Who else is the emperor of such elegant english? Who else has slipped so often on perilous banana peels and yet lived to put praise of banana peels on sonorous pages?"

One minute he accuses God of having started the world on a shoestring; the next minute he executes a simple twist of the wrist and a slight motion of the hand and insinuates these bones shall rise again.

Yet he wastes time walking and telling the air, "I am superior to the wind," or on proud days, "I am the wind myself."

WHIFFS OF THE OHIO RIVER AT CINCINNATI

1

A young thing in spring green slippers, stockings,
silk vivid as lilac-time grass,
And a red line of a flaunt of fresh silk again up under
her chin—
She slipped along the street at half-past six in the evening,
came out of the stairway where her street address is,
where she has a telephone number—
Just a couple of blocks from the street next to the
Ohio river, where men sit in chairs tipped back,
watching the evening lights on the water of the
Ohio river—
She started out for the evening, dark brown calf eyes,
roaming and hunted eyes,
And her young wild ways were not so young any more,
nor so wild.

Another evening primrose stood in a stairway, with a
white knit sweater fitting her shoulders and ribs close.
She asked a young ballplayer passing for a few kind words
and a pleasant look—and he slouched up to her like an
umpire calling a runner out at the home plate—he
gave her a few words and passed on.
She had bells on, she was jingling, and yet—her young
wild ways were not so young any more, nor so wild.

2

When I asked for fish in the restaurant facing the Ohio river, with fish signs and fish pictures all over the wooden, crooked frame of the fish shack, the young man said, "Come around next Friday—the fish is all gone today."

So, I took eggs, fried, straight up, one side, and he murmured, humming, looking out at the shining breast of the Ohio river, "And the next is something else; and the next is something else."

The customer next was a hoarse roustabout, handling nail kegs on a steamboat all day, asking for three eggs, sunny side up, three, nothing less, shake us a mean pan of eggs.

And while we sat eating eggs, looking at the shining breast of the Ohio river in the evening lights, he had his thoughts and I had mine thinking how the French who found the Ohio river named it La Belle Riviere meaning a woman easy to look at.

SUBURBAN SICILIAN SKETCHES

1

The cockleburs came on the burdocks,
a little of thistle, a little of flower,
a light red purple tip on raw green bur.

The burdocks came like hoodlums come;
they came with neither permits nor requests;
they took what they wanted. "If anybody
asks you, this is us, and we are here because
we decided to come to the party—we invited
ourselves and we are welcome."

Listen in the summer when the roots dig in,
the hoodlum roots of the burdock gangs;
what each one sings is much like—
"I'm gonna live anyhow until I die."

In the time of the turning leaves
the light red purple tip and the raw green bur
pass and turn to a brown, to a drab and dirty brown.

2

In Mel-a-rose among the sons of Sicily
I saw a sheep, a dirty undersized sheep,
In the front yard cabbage patch of a son of Sicily,

And the wool of the sheep had never been combed,
The wool of the sheep was snarled and knotted.
And the burdock gang was there,
Burs in the wool with a drab and hoodlum mutter,
'This is us, we invited ourselves and we're welcome.'

3

The sober-faced goat crops grass next to the sidewalk.
A clinking chain connects the collar of the goat with a steel
pin driven in the ground.
Next to the sidewalk the goat crops November grass,
Pauses seldom, halts not at all, incessantly goes after grass.

4

The playhouse of the Sicilian children
thatched with maple branches their father
threw over for a roof in summer,
the playhouse roof is dry;
It sags and crackles in the west wind.

5

The Sicilian father is tying cornstalks
for a winter vest at the roots of the young apple tree.
This, and the red peppers drying on the cellar door,
this is one of the signs of November.

FLAT WATERS OF THE WEST IN KANSAS

After the sunset in the mountains
there are shadows and shoulders
standing to the stars.
After the sunset on the prairie
there are only the stars,
the stars standing alone.

The flat waters of the west in Kansas
take up the sunset lights
one by one and all—
the bars, the barriers, the slow-down,
the loose lasso handy on the saddle,
the big hats, the slip-knot handkerchiefs,
the cattle horns, the hocks and haunches
ready for the kneel-down, the sleep
of the humps and heads in the grass,
the pony with a rump to the wind
or curving a neck to a front foot—
if a baby moon comes after the sunset
it is a witness of many homes,
many home-makers under the night sky-shed—
and the flat waters of the west in Kansas
take up the baby moon, the witness,
take it and let it ride,
take it and let it have a home.

The great plains
gave the buffalo grass.

The great plains
gave the buffalo grass.

THREE SLANTS AT NEW YORK

New York is a city of many cats.
Some say New York is Babylon.
There is a rose and gold mist New York.

New York is a city of many cats; they eat the swill of the poor and the swell swill; they rub their backs against fire escapes and weep to each other from alley barrels; they are born to the cat life of New York.

Some say New York is Babylon; here are Babylonian dancers stripped to the flash of the navel, while the waiters murmur, "Yes," in undertones to regular customers calling for the same whiskey as last time; and having seen a thing of much preparation, toil and genius, having spoken to each other of how marvelous it is, they eat and drink till it is forgotten; and the topics are easy topics, such as which bootleggers take the biggest risks, and what light risks superior bootleggers travel under.

There is a rose and gold New York of evening lights and sunsets; there is a mist New York seen from steamboats, a massed and spotted hovering ghost, a shape the fists of men have lifted out of dirt and work and daylight and early morning oaths after sleep nights.

New York is a city of many cats.
Some say New York is Babylon.
There is a rose and gold mist New York.

LANDSCAPE INCLUDING THREE STATES OF THE UNION

The mountains stand up around the main street in Harper's Ferry.
Shadows stand around the town, and mist creeps up the flanks of tall rocks.
A terrible push of waters sometime made a cloven way for their flood here.
On the main street the houses huddle; the walls crouch for cover.
And yet—up at Hilltop House, or up on Jefferson's Rock, there are lookouts;
There are the long curves of the meeting of the Potomac and the Shenandoah;
There is the running water home of living fish and silver of the sun.
The lazy flat rocks spread out browns for green and blue silver to run over.
Mascots of silver circles move around Harper's Ferry.
No wonder John Brown came here to fight and be hanged.
No wonder Thomas Jefferson came here to sit with his proud red head writing notes on the great State of Virginia.
Borders hem the town, borders of Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland;
Be absent minded a minute or two and you guess at what state you are in.
Harper's Ferry is a meeting place of winds and waters, rocks and ranges.

CROSSING OHIO WHEN POPPIES BLOOM IN ASHTABULA

1

Go away. Leave the high winds of May
blowing over the fields of grape vines
near the northwest corner of Pennsylvania.
Leave the doorstep peonies
pushing high bosoms at passers-by
in northern Ohio towns in May.

Leave the boys flying light blue kites
on a deep blue sky; and the yellow, the
yellow spilling over the drinking rims
of the buttercups, piling their yellows
into foam blown sea rims of yellow;
Go away; go to New York,
Broadway, Fifth Avenue, glass
lights and leaves, glass faces,
fingers; go . . .

2

Pick me poppies in Ohio,
mother.
Pick me poppies in a back yard
in Ashtabula.

May going, poppies coming, summer humming: make it a poppy summer, mother; the leaves sing in the silk, the leaves sing a tawny red gold; seven sunsets saved themselves to be here now.

Pick me poppies, mother; go, May; wash me, summer; shoot up this back yard in Ashtabula, shoot it up, give us a daylight fireworks in Ohio, burn it up with tawny red gold.

MARCH OF THE HUNGRY MOUNTAINS

Across Nevada and Utah
Look for the march of the hungry mountains.

They are cold and white,
They are taking a rest,
They washed their faces in awful fires,
They lifted their heads for heavy snows.

White, O white, are the vapors,
And the wind in the early morning,
White are the hungry mountains.

The tireless gray desert,
The tireless salt sea,
The tireless mountains,
They are thinking over something.
They are wondering, "What next?"
They are thankful, thinking it over,
Waiting, sleeping, drying their faces from awful fires,
Lifting their heads into higher snow,
White in the early morning wind.

"Come and listen to us,"
Said the marching, hungry mountains.
"You will hear nothing at all,
And you will learn only a little,
And, yet listening, your ears may grow longer and softer;
You may yet have long, clear, listening ears.
Come and listen," said the mocking, hungry mountains.

DIALOGUE

LAKE MICHIGAN: We have been here quite a while.

ILLINOIS PRAIRIE: Maybe.

LAKE: We have seen ten cities.

PRAIRIE: Eleven.

LAKE: Eleven with Chicago.

SMOKE BLUE

The mountains stood on their bottom ends;
the smoky mountains stood around in blue;
the blue mountains stood around in smoke;

The higher the line of the burnt timber climbed,
the lower the line of the green timber crept;
the creep of the burnt and the green
was a couple of shadows moving through each other.

The farms and the fences came,
And the farmers fixing fences.
The snake rail fences measured the farms;
Hog tight, horse high, they held for the owners
The hogs for hams and the horses for hauls.

The farms came to the valley,
And the mountains stood on their bottom ends;
The mountains stood in a smoke and a blue.

The cities came, the lumber wagons,
The lumber carpenters, the lathers, the plasterers;
The bricklayers came in their overalls,
And the hod-carriers up and down the ladders with mortar
And the bricklayers calling down to the hod-carriers,
"Mort!"
And the concrete mixers came with their endless bellies
For sand and crushed stone and gravel and cement;
The cities came, stood up, and swore, "This is us, by God."

The cities, the families, the tall two-fisted men, swearing,
"This is us, by God, this is God's country."

The boomers boomed the boosters,
The boosters boosted the boomers.

And the mountains stood on their bottom ends.
The mountains stood in a smoke and a blue.

AGAIN?

Old Man Woolworth put up a building.
There it was; his dream; all true;
The biggest building in the world.
Babel, the Nineveh Hanging Gardens,
Karnak, all old, outclassed.
And now, here at last, what of it?
What about it? Well, every morning
We'll walk around it and look up.
And every morning we'll ask what
It means and where it's going.
It's a dream; all true; going somewhere,
That's a cinch; women buying mousetraps,
Wire cloth dishrags, ten cent sheet music,
They paid for it; the electric tower
Might yell an electric sign to the inbound
Ocean liners, 'Look what the washerwomen
Of America can do with their nickels,' or
'See what a nickel and a dime can do,'
And that wouldn't clear Old Man Woolworth's
Head; it was a mystery, a dream, the biggest
Building in the world; Babel, the Nineveh
Hanging Gardens, Karnak, all old,
Outclassed. So the old man cashes in,
The will of the old man is dug out,
And the widow gets thirty million dollars,
Enough to put up another building,
Another bigger than any in the world,
Bigger than Babel, the Nineveh Hanging Gardens,

Karnak, another mystery, another dream
To stand and look up at
And ask what it means.

EVEN NUMBERS

1

A house like a man all lean and coughing,
a man with his two hands in the air at a cry,
"Hands up."

A house like a woman shrunken and stoop-shouldered,
shrunken and done with dishes and dances.

These two houses I saw going uphill in Cincinnati.

2

Two houses leaning against each other like drunken
brothers at a funeral,

Two houses facing each other like two blind wrestlers
hunting a hold on each other,

These four scrawny houses I saw on a dead level
cinder patch in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

3

And by the light of a white moon in Waukesha, Wisconsin,
I saw a lattice work in lilac time . . . white-mist lavender
. . . a sweet moonlit lavender . . .

CHILLICOTHE

There was a man walked out
Of a house in Chillicothe, Ohio,—
Or the house was in Chillicothe, Illinois,
Or again in Chillicothe, Missouri,—

And the man said to himself,
Speaking as men speak their thoughts
To themselves after a funeral or a wedding,
After seeing a baby born with raw, red toes
And the toe-nails pink as the leaves of fresh flowers,
Or after seeing a kinsman try to hold on
To the fading door-frames of life
And then languish, let go, and sleep,—

Speaking his own thoughts,
Or what he believed in so far as he knew
To be thoughts peculiar to himself alone,
At that hour of time, under the clocks and suns,
He said, and to himself:

"I have never seen myself live a day.
I have told myself I get up in the morning,
I wash my face, I reach for a towel, I find a razor,
I shave off a day or a two-day growth of whiskers.
I look in the looking-glass and say,
'Birdie, whither away to-day?' or I say,
'You old hound dog, are you on to yourself?' or
'What's in the wind for this evening?' or,

'Who put the fish in efficiency?' or,
'What packages will be handed us this morning?'

"Yes, I stand in front of the looking-glass,
And while I am shaving I sometimes ask questions
Exactly as though the house I am shaving in
Is a wagon crossing Oklahoma looking for a home,
Or a steamboat on the tossing salt, two days from Sandy Hook,
Or a Pullman sleeper crossing the divide in Colorado—
This must be why I say to the looking-glass,
'You are the same when I am shaving, always,
Whether we are in Oklahoma, off Sandy Hook,
Or hitting the high spot of the Colorado divide;
Your business as a looking-glass is to say 'Me, too,'
'Here it is,' 'Here you are,' 'I don't want to tell you no lie.
If I tell a lie, I lose out as a looking-glass.'

"There are hinged elbows of arms, sockets in shoulder-bones.
And out beyond the elbows are finger-bones, finger-ends.
And after a while the command runs out to the finger-ends
To wipe off the lather, throw a hot towel, witch hazel,
Then dry smooth the face, talcum, and call it a once over.
This action finished, I can testify all day, 'I shaved this morning'
Or if there is a murder or a robbery, and I am called as a witness
In the matter of an identity or an alibi or *corpus delicti*,
I can solemnly swear at this hour I shaved my face, at this hour

I commanded the members and parts of my body in these performances.
I shaved this morning.

"Yet all this is only a whiff, a little comic beginning.
Ever since I have owned more than one shirt
I have had to decide which shirt to wear to-day.
There was a year when I had only one shirt,
And even then I had to decide whether I would wear that one shirt
Or whether I would get along with no shirt at all.
Now, having six shirts, I must pick one and let five others go.
If there are buttons off the shirt, I decide
How many new buttons go on.

"Decisions—see? It is early in the day, it is not a half-hour
Since I was in the sheets of unremembering slumber.
Yet the day's decisions have mounted steadily as the climb of the sun
Up and on across the elements of the sky.

"Yes? Quite so. And sure, Mike.
These things count for nothing much.
There is no special destiny about them.
They are different from falling in love
Or calling up a doctor to tie an artery
Or writing a lawyer about a bastardy case,
Or telling a panhandler you are broke yourself,
And do your shopping by looking in the show-windows.

"Yes, they are all different.
Yet they all connect up with civilization
Or tombs and ramparts earlier than civilization.
So God help your soul when you get tired of them and say:
'I want something new. I want two and two to be five. I want
a miracle to happen, miracles now and henceforth. I
want the light that never was on land or sea."

And all the time it is the same man speaking,
The same man who walked out of his house
In Chillicothe, Ohio, Chillicothe, Illinois, or Chillicothe,
Missouri;
It is the same man speaking his own thoughts,
As if thoughts come to him and belong to him alone,
And as though it is useless to pass them on—
It is the same man speaking.

"I have never seen myself live a day.
I have pulled up a chair to the breakfast-table
And watched children tuck napkins under their chin,
Spill the yellow of eggs down their bibs,
Clean their plates, lick their spoons, call for more to eat,
While they banged their spoons and bowls on the table
And went on yammering for more to eat.
I have seen them use their tongues as cats and dogs
Employ their tongues, as utensils, conveniences,
With laughters shining in their eyes.
And when they began talking, they lied to each other,
They lied with an importance of falsifying large.
They broke out with impossible propositions.
They acted as though they live in a republic of separate
laws,

Under a government whose laws go deeper than the speech
Of people expert and renowned for their ways of speech.
Their laughter ran as the water of waterfalls runs.

"They were so proud, so sure, in all their ways, I said:
'What goes? What drops off? What is the sheath they lose
When they grow up and get big and leave behind them
Their republic of separate laws,
Their government of laws deeper than speech,
Their civilization of impossible propositions?
Why shall they seem no longer so proud, so sure,
With laughter running as the water of waterfalls runs?'

"I ask myself just that question.
I asked it far inside of myself.
And it was such a far-off question, if I had whispered it
They would have known it was not to be answered."

And this was only one morning
Among the many mornings of that man
Speaking to himself what he considered his own thoughts
Going out of the door of his house in Chillicothe.

And these are only a few of the thoughts of that one morning.
For, when he reached the gate and stepped to the sidewalk,
He said again to himself:

"I have never seen myself live a day."

SPLINTER

The voice of the last cricket
across the first frost
is one kind of good-by.
It is so thin a splinter of singing.

SANTA FE SKETCHES

1

The valley was swept with a blue broom to the west.

And to the west, on the fringes of a mesa sunset,
there are blue broom leavings, hangover blue wisps—
bluer than the blue floor the broom touched
before and after it caught the blue sweepings.

The valley was swept with a blue broom to the west.

2

When a city picks a valley—and a valley picks a city—
it is a marriage—and there are children.

Since the bluebirds come by twenties
and the blackbirds come by forties
in March, when the snow skirls in a sunshine wind;
since they come up the valley to the city, heading north,
it is taken as a testimony of witnesses.

When the bluebird barriers drop,
when the redwing bars go down,
the flurries of sun flash now on the tail feathers—
it is up the valley—up and on—
by twenties and forties—
and the tail feathers flashing.

In the cuts of the red dirt arroyos,
at the change of the mist of the mountain waterfalls,
in cedars and pinons, at the scars and gashes,
at the patches where new corn will be planted,
at the Little Canyon of the Beans,
they stop and count how far they have come,
the twenties and forties stop and count.

Whoever expected them to remember,
to carry little pencils between their toes,
notebooks under their wings?
By twenties, by forties—it is enough;
"When wings come, and sun, and a new wind
out of the Southwest whispering—
and especially wings—we forget—
we forget."

They saw Navajos ride with spears and arrows,
Spaniards ride with blunderbusses,
cowboys ride with Colts and Winchesters—
they saw the changing shooting irons—
and now the touring-car and flivver
creep up the red dirt valley, among the rabbit bushes,
passing the clean-piled clean-cut woodpiles
on the backs of mountain-born burros.

3

The valley sits with its thoughts.

"Have I not had my thoughts by myself
four hundred years?" she asks.

"Have I not seen the guns of Spain, Mexico
and America go up and down the valley?

"Is not holy faith and the name of a saint
in my name?

"Was I not called La Villa de Sante Fe de
San Francisco de Assisi?

"Do they not name a railroad from Chicago
to Los Angeles after me?

"Did they not give a two-thousand-mile wagon
trail of the first gold diggers, the forty-niners,
my name, the short pet name, Santa Fe?

"Do you wonder I sit here, like an easy woman,
not young, not old—
Do you wonder I sit here, shrewd, faded, asking:
What next? who next?
And answering my own questions: I don't care—
let the years worry."

4

By twenties and forties,
the bluebirds and the redwings,
out of the bars, the barriers,
in a flash of tail feathers
on and up the valley—

"When wings come
and the Southwest whispering,
we forget."

5

The valley city sits among its brooding facts,
"Six years ago—only ponies, bridles, saddles circled around the public square, the plaza, the place of the Summer band concerts—
And now—the varnished motor-cars stand with funeral faces filling the old pony hitching places.

"I have seen candles keep the night watch till the coal oil came and then the live wires—
Thirty miles away the mountain villages see two strings of lights hung like Summer flies—the penitentiary night lights of Santa Fe.

"The fast travelers with extra tires come in a hurry and solve me and pass on to say all their lives,
'Santa Fe? oh yes, Santa Fe, I have seen Santa Fe.'
'Hurry up,' is their first and last word on my zigzag streets, my lazy 'dobe corners.
'Hurry up, we must see the Old Church, the Old Bell, the Oldest House in the United States, touch the doors, and then go on—hurry up!'

"They are afraid grass will grow under their feet—they say so as a proverb—
And I am afraid they will knock loose some cool green whisper of moss in a chink of a wall."

6

In April the little farmers go out in the foothills,
up the mountain patches.
They go to gamble against the weather, the rain.

"If the rain comes like last year, we shall have a fat winter,
If the rain comes like year before last, it is a lean Christmas for us."

They put in their beans, the magic frijole, the chile,
they stretch open hands to the sky,
and tell the rain to come,
to come, come, come.

With a willing rain the gamblers win.
If the rain says, "Not this year," they lose.

So the little farmers go out in the foothills,
up the mountain patches in April,
telling every bean in the sack
to send up a wish to God
for water to come . . . out of the sky.

7

A loose and changeable sky
looks on a loose and changeable land.

The rain rips the wagon road ruts
too deep for wheels—the wagons make a new road,
the rain makes a new little arroyo.

Pack burros tussling under bundled woodpiles go by
with eyes murmuring, "Everything is the same as it always was."
The tough little tussling foot of a burro, the wag of
a left ear to a right ear, are they joking, "Everything is the same as it always was?"

8

Proud and lazy Spaniards with your pearl swords
of conquest, your blunderbuss guns of flags and victory—

Who did you conquer and fasten down as your vassals?

The blood is dry and mixed in a mixing-bowl.
The passion kiss and the sunlit blaze of the Indian woman's eye—the faces and the hair of Spain and the Aztecs, Moors and the Navajos—are mixed in a mixing bowl —and a passer-by writes:

"In Mexico nobody knows how to sing
and everybody sings."

Come back and pick up your pearl-handled swords,
your blunderbuss guns.
Sniff with the tourists in the Santa Fe Museum—
See them look at their stop-watches—
"A little gas now—and we're on our way—come on kid—on your way."

9

The valley was swept with a blue broom to the west,
there are blue broom leavings on the sky,
hangover blue wisps.
The valley city sits with its thoughts.
"Have I not had my thoughts by myself
four hundred years?" she asks.
"Do you wonder I sit here, shrewd, faded,
asking: What next? who next?
And answering: I don't care—let the
years worry."

10

By twenties and forties,
the bluebirds and the redwings,
out of the bars, the barriers,
in a flash of tail feathers
on and up the valley—
"When wings come
and the Southwest whispering,
we forget."

LITTLE ALBUM

NEW HAMPSHIRE AGAIN

I remember black winter waters,
I remember thin white birches,
I remember sleepy twilight hills,
I remember riding across New Hampshire lengthways.
I remember a station named "Halcyon," a brakeman calling to passengers "Halcyon!! Halcyon!!"
I remember having heard the gold diggers dig out only enough for wedding rings.
I remember a stately child telling me her father gets letters addressed "Robert Frost, New Hampshire."
I remember an old Irish saying, "His face is like a fiddle and every one who sees him must love him."
I have one remember, two remembers, ten remembers; I have a little handkerchief bundle of remembers.

One early evening star just over a cradle moon,

One dark river with a spatter of
later stars caught,
One funnel of a motorcar head-
light up a hill,
One team of horses hauling a
bob sled load of wood,
One boy on skis picking himself
up after a tumble—
I remember one and a one and a
one riding across New Hamp-
shire lengthways: I have a lit-
tle handkerchief bundle of re-
members.

A COUPLE

He was in Cincinnati, she in Burlington.
He was in a gang of Postal Telegraph linemen.
She was a pot rassler in a boarding house.
"The crying is lonely," she wrote him.
"The same here," he answered.
The winter went by and he came back and they married
And he went away again where rainstorms knocked down
telegraph poles and wires dropped with frozen sleet.
And again she wrote him, "The crying is lonely."
And again he answered, "The same here."
Their five children are in the public schools.
He votes the Republican ticket and is a taxpayer.
They are known among those who know them
As honest American citizens living honest lives.
Many things that bother other people never bother them.
They have their five children and they are a couple,
A pair of birds that call to each other and satisfy.
As sure as he goes away she writes him, "The crying is
lonely"
And he flashes back the old answer, "The same here."
It is a long time since he was a gang lineman at Cincinnati
And she was a pot rassler in a Burlington boarding house;
Yet they never get tired of each other; they are a couple.

CHICAGO BOY BABY

The baby picked from an ash barrel by the night police
came to the hospital of the Franciscan brothers
in a diaper and a white sheet.

It was a windy night in October, leaves and geese scurrying
across the north sky, and the curb pigeons more ravenous
than ever for city corn in the cracks of the street stones.

The two policemen who picked the baby from the ash barrel
are grayheads; they talk about going on the pension list
soon; they talk about whether the baby, surely a big man
now, votes this year for Smith or Hoover.

JOKE GOLD

It arose with him as a joke,
His saying so often with a mystical gesture
Known to all as a joke,
"There's gold in them hills, Jack."
All of us laughed and he laughed most
At the comic illusion of gold hunters
Picking hills to gamble in, with
Hopes and shovels, burros and frying pans,
The yellow shine of the high lure
Overlying life's high points.
It was all there in his sudden interjection,
"There's gold in them hills, Jack."
His wife, his other women, his new jobs
One after the other, his swaggering neckties,
Sport shirts, and allusions to men with fat
Checkbooks he lunched with chummily,
It all tied in with his always saying
Gold lay in hills beyond, joke gold
In joke hills to be made into real gold
In real hills for wishing, for only enough
Wishing—it was all in his voice when he
Went away and was never heard from again,
Stepping on the outbound train west
Saying, "Gold in them hills, Jack."

THE OLD FLAGMAN

The old flagman has great-grand-children.
Ruddy as a hard nut, hair in his ears, clear sea lights
in his eyes,
He goes out of his shanty and lifts a sign: Stop.

"Y'see where the sign is dented?
I hit a fellah over the head with it,
The only way to stop him gettin' run over.
They want to get killed; I have to stop 'em.
That's my job."

He was twenty years a policeman in Chicago.
"I carry a bullet in my guts an I got an abscess in
my gall bladder—I picked this shanty for a rest.
"I go slow and careful; I got a leak in the heart; if
I laugh too hard my heart stops—and I fall down;
I have to watch myself."

A third rail car hoots up the line.
He goes out with a warning in his hand: Stop.
"These damn fools, they want to get under the wheels.
I have to stop 'em."

Ruddy as a hard nut, hair in his ears, clear sea lights
in his eyes.

IGLITS AND HIS WIFE

Iglit's wife spoke of her own novel, of a Norwegian's novel and came finally to speak of Whimsley and Whimsley's wife and egg spots on the wallpaper and fly specks on the new white kalsomining of the sleeping room of Whimsley and Whimsley's wife.

> Iglit's wife went on patching a picture together in clean polite language, hearsay and circumstance.

The cool abstraction of the scientist, the mocking sleight-of-hand passes of the artist, the galloping babble of the gossip who mixes names and dates for the sake of the story and only asks a laugh or a giggle before going on to another laugh—

> These were lost in the list of witnesses ready to testify to the egg spots on the wallpaper, the fly specks on the new white kalsomining of the sleeping room of Whimsley and Whimsley's wife.

Iglits mentions the weather to the housemaid serving washed apricots for breakfast, mentions letters and filing devices to the stenographer in the downtown office.

> Iglits buys whiskey from two booze runners; a bottle is in his desk always; Iglits says he wants to be lit up a little every day.

MEDLEY

Ignorance came in stones of gold;
The ignorant slept while the hangmen
Hanged the keepers of the lights
Of sweet stars: such were the apothegms,
Offhand offerings of mule-drivers
Eating sandwiches of rye bread,
Salami and onions.

"Too Many Books," we always called him;
A landscape of masterpieces and old favorites
Fished with their titles for his eyes
In the upstairs and downstairs rooms
Of his house. Whenever he passed
The old-time bar-room where Pete Morehouse
Shot the chief of police, where
The sponge squads shot two bootleggers,
He always remembered the verse story,
The Face on the Bar-room Floor—
The tramp on a winter night,
Saddened and warmed with whiskey,
Telling of a woman he wanted
And a woman who wanted him,
How whiskey wrecked it all;
Taking a piece of chalk,
Picturing her face on the bar-room floor,
Fixing the lines of her face
While he told the story,

Then gasping and falling with finished heartbeats,
Dead.

And whenever he passed over the bridge at night
And took the look up the river to smaller bridges,
Barge lights, and looming shores,
He always thought of Edgar Allan Poe,
With a load of hootch in him,
Going to a party of respectable people
Who called for a speech,
Who listened to Poe recite the Lord's Prayer,
Correctly, word for word, yet with lush, unmistakable
Intonations, so haunting the dinner-party people
All excused themselves to each other.

Whenever Too Many Books
Passed over the town bridge in the gloaming,
He thought of Poe breaking up that party
Of respectable people. Such was Too Many Books—
We called him that.

IMPLICATIONS

When the charge of election bribery was brought against an Illinois senator, he replied, "I read the Bible and believe it from cover to cover."

When his accusers specified five hundred dollars of corruption money was paid in a St. Louis hotel bath room, his friends answered, "He is faithful to his wife and always kind to his children."

When he was ousted from the national senate and the doors of his bank were closed by government receivers and a grand jury indicted him, he took the vows of an old established church.

When a jury acquitted him of guilt as a bank wrecker, following the testimony of prominent citizens that he was an honest man, he issued a statement to the public for the newspapers, proclaiming he knew beforehand no jury would darken the future of an honest man with an unjust verdict.

TO THE GHOST OF JOHN MILTON

If I should pamphleteer twenty years against royalists,
With rewards offered for my capture dead or alive,
And jails and scaffolds always near,

And then my wife should die and three ignorant daughters
Should talk about their father as a joke, and steal the
Earnings of books, and the poorhouse always reaching for
me,

If I then lost my eyes and the world was all dark and I
Sat with only memories and talk—

I would write "Paradise Lost," I would marry a second wife
And on her dying I would marry a third pair of eyes to
Serve my blind eyes, I would write "Paradise Regained," I
Would write wild, foggy, smoky, wordy books—

I would sit by the fire and dream of hell and heaven,
Idiots and kings, women my eyes could never look on again,
And God Himself and the rebels God threw into hell.

HEAVY AND LIGHT

And you, old woman, are carrying scrub buckets to-night.
Just like last year, just like the year before,
Every Saturday night you come gripping the handles,
Throwing the suds, cleaning this room's floor.
They call you "Mrs. Swanson," your hair is thin and gray,
It is a lean little wiry frame you move in.
In your eyes you are ready for whatever comes next.
Your sons have scrubbed ship decks, an uncle somewhere
Stood at a wheel in a Baltic storm—why must there be
Some rag of romance, some slant of a scarlet star
Over and around your scrub buckets?

. . .

Fritters used to say, "There is poetry in neckties."
He picked neckties with a theory of color and design.
He knew haberdashers the way book bugs know where
second hand book stores are.
For a picnic he wore pink, for a fall fog day a grey blue,
And a four-in-hand, a bow, a bat-eye, each of its separate
individual in silk, plain or striped or spotted,
Each had its message, its poem, its reminders, for Fritters.
"I know how to pick 'em," he used to say, "I know the right
scarf for either a wedding or a funeral or a poker
party, there is poetry in neckties."

EARLY HOURS

(To A. W. F.)

Since you packed your rubber bottom boots
And took the night train for northern Wisconsin
To hunt deer in the ten days allowed by law,
I have remembered your saying the hunters
Get up out of bed and dress for shooting,
For reading snow tracks, circling, waiting, firing,
At the hour of half past four in the morning;
Now this has been in my mind sometimes
When after a long day's work and more than half a night
I opened the east window before going to bed
At half past three o'clock in the morning
And there were deer feet and horns of stars on the sky.
I listened to the chiming of a watch and said,
"A couple of hours and Jim'll kill a deer, maybe."
There are different kinds of early hours.

HUNGRY AND LAUGHING MEN

Love to keep? There is no love to keep.
There is memory to keep of running water,
running horses, running weather, running days.

When I see the rain-glad eaves filling and the
beat of the running spills on the ferns,
Or if I come to a pony heel mark, a half loop on
a smooth Kentucky blue grass,
Or stand in a Dutch landscape of running threats
in changing lights of interchangeable running
sun and rain-cloud—
I shall take old note-books of Hokusai and Hiroshige,
memoirs of the wonderful hungry laughing men, and in
an off corner, write my code:

Love to keep? There is no love to keep.
There is memory of runners, foot-glad flingers,
heel marks in the blue grass, running
threats of interchangeable sun and rain-cloud.

FATE

Fate comes with pennies or dollars.
An Indian head or the Goddess of Liberty:
    it is all the same to Fate.
One day copper, one day silver, and these
    are samples:
        The cry held back
        the kiss kept under
        the song choked down
        the wish never spoken.
They are pennies and dollars these.
The girl at the sink washing dishes knows them.
The girl who has breakfast in bed knows them.

CHEAP BLUE

Hill blue among the leaves in summer,
Hill blue among the branches in winter—
Light sea blue at the sand beaches in winter,
Deep sea blue in the deep deep waters—
Prairie blue, mountain blue—
    Who can pick a pocketful of these blues,
        a handkerchief of these blues,
    And go walking, talking, walking as though
    God gave them a lot of loose change
    For spending money, to throw at the birds,
    To flip into the tin cups of blind men?

LAVENDER LILIES

The lavender lilies in Garfield Park lay lazy in the morning sun.
A cool summer wind flicked at our eyebrows and the pansies fixed their yellow drops and circles for a day's show.
The statue of Lincoln, an ax in his hand, a bronze ax, was a chum of five bluejays crazy and calling, "Another lovely morning, another lovely morning."
And the headline of my newspaper said, "Thirty dead in race riots."
And Lincoln with the ax, and all the lavender lilies and the cool summer wind and the pansies, the living lips of bronze and leaves, the living tongues of bluejays, all they could say was,
"Another lovely morning, another lovely morning."

HALF WAY

At the half-way house the pony died.
The road stretched ahead, the sunny hills,
people in the fields, running waters,
towns with new names, windmills pointing
circles in the air at holy cross roads.
It was here we stopped at the half-way house,
here where the pony died.
Here the keeper of the house said, "It is strange
how many ponies die here."

BETWEEN WORLDS

And he said to himself
in a sunken morning moon
between two pines,
between lost gold and lingering green:

I believe I will count up my worlds.
There seem to me to be three.
There is a world I came from which is Number One.
There is a world I am in now, which is Number Two.
There is a world I go to next, which is Number Three.

There was the seed pouch, the place I lay dark in, nursed and shaped in a warm, red, wet cuddling place; if I tugged at a latchstring or doubled a dimpled fist or twitched a leg or a foot, only the Mother knew.

There is the place I am in now, where I look back and look ahead, and dream and wonder.

There is the next place—

And he took a look out of a window
at a sunken morning moon
between two pines,
between lost gold and lingering green.

M'LISS AND LOUIE

When M'Liss went away from the old home
with its purple lilacs in front and white
fence pickets and green grass—

Where the slow black covers of evening and
night came dropping softly before the gold
moon came on the yellow roses—

Louie, the lonesome, spoke his thoughts to himself,
sitting in that same moonlight coming on the lilacs,
the roses:—

> Let her win her own thoughts; let her be
> M'Liss always; let her sit alone after
> whatever happens and see some of the outs
> and ins of it;
>
> Let her know the feel of the bones of
> one of her hands resting on the other;
>
> Let her lose love, gold,
> names, promises, savings;
>
> Let her know hot lips, crazy love letters,
> cool heels, good wings, birds crossing big
> windows of blue skies, time, oh God, time to
> think things over; let her be M'Liss;

Let her be easy with all meanings of quiet
new sunsets, quiet fresh mornings, and long
sleeps in the old still moonlight;

Let her be M'Liss always.

Well . . . well . . . it was growing late in the evening of that day when M'Liss went away, late, late into the night, as Louie, the lonesome, sat sleepy in the gold of that same moon coming on the fence pickets and the green grass, the purple lilacs, the yellow roses.

He was sleepy. Yet he could not sleep.

BITTER SUMMER THOUGHTS

PHIZZOG

This face you got,
This here phizzog you carry around,
You never picked it out for yourself,
    at all, at all—did you?
This here phizzog—somebody handed it
    to you—am I right?
Somebody said, "Here's yours, now go see
    what you can do with it."
Somebody slipped it to you and it was like
    a package marked:
"No goods exchanged after being taken away"—
This face you got.

BITTER SUMMER THOUGHTS

The riders of the wind
Weave their shadows,
Trample their time-beats,
Take their time-bars,
Shake out scrolls,
And run over the oats, the barley,
Over the summer wheat-fields.

The farmer and the horse,
The steel and the wagon
Come and clean the fields
And leave us stubble.
The time-bars of the wind are gone;
The shadows, time-beats, scrolls,
They are woven away, put past,
Into the hands of threshers,
Into chaff, into dust,
Into rust and buff of straw stacks,
Into sliding, shoveling oats and wheat.
Over the wheat-fields,
Over the oats,
Summer weaves, is woven away, put past,
Into dust, into rust and buff.

Indian runners ran along this river-road.
They cleaned the wind they clutched in ribs and lungs,
Up over the clean ankles, the clean elbows.

The Frenchmen came with lessons and prayers.
The Scotchmen came with horses and rifles.
Cities, war, railroads came.

In the rain-storms, in the blizzards,
This river-road is clean.

BITTER SUMMER THOUGHTS—No. 3

Firecrackers came from China.
Watermelons came from Egypt.
The horses of the sun hoist their heads and nicker at the
fence where the first old evening stars fish for faces.
And the light of the eyes of a child at a morning window
calling to an early morning snow, this too is a stranger
among strangers.

The splendors of old books may be counted.
The spears of brass lights, shining in the dawn of the tug-
boats and warehouses, throw other splendors.
Yet a corn wind is in my ears, a rushing of corn leaves
swept by summer, it is in my ears, the corn wind.

BITTER SUMMER THOUGHTS—No. XXII

QUICKER AND EASIER

The billboards and the street car signs told the people,
"Say it with flowers" and those who could buy flowers
And who knew no other way of saying found themselves
In the habit of saying it with flowers.
Men whose personal fragrance had no special whiff
Of fresh air, clean dirt, and growing things,
Found it easier to telephone the florist
And say it with flowers—quicker and easier.

YES, SAY IT WITH FLOWERS!

Women rather wear flowers than no flowers.
Gift flowers never tell where they came from.
A woman's flowers ought to whisper she has
secrets worth hearing told.
If a woman tells a man, "Send me no flowers,"
that is the end.
All women try to guess who would send an armful
of roses for the coffin if one dies, if one has
a funeral, if all one's friends know there is a
funeral.
Each woman knows what one flower she would wear if
called on to wear a flower at a wedding to-morrow.

BARS

Beat at the bars.
Cry out your cry of want.
Let yourself out if you can.
Find the sea, find the moon,
if you can.
Shut the windows, open the doors.
There are no windows, are no doors?
There is no sea, is no moon?
Cry your cry, let yourself out if you can.

THEY ASK: IS GOD, TOO, LONELY?

When God scooped up a handful of dust,
And spit on it, and molded the shape of man,
And blew a breath into it and told it to walk—
That was a great day.

And did God do this because He was lonely?
Did God say to Himself he must have company
And therefore He would make man to walk the earth
And set apart churches for speech and song with God?

These are questions.
They are scrawled in old caves.
They are painted in tall cathedrals.
There are men and women so lonely they believe
God, too, is lonely.

TWO NOCTURNS

1

The sea speaks a language polite people never repeat.
It is a colossal scavenger slang and has no respect.
Is it a terrible thing to be lonely?

2

The prairie tells nothing unless the rain is willing.
It is a woman with thoughts of her own.
Is it a terrible thing to love much?

WANTING THE IMPOSSIBLE

Suppose he wishes balloon routes
to five new moons, one woman,
and a two-acre bean farm with
bean poles and waltzing scare-
crows wearing clown hats:
Ah-hah, ah-hah, this to God,
this to me, this is something.

Who put up that cage?
Who hung it up with bars, doors?
Why do those on the inside want to get out?
Why do those outside want to get in?
What is this crying inside and out all the time?
What is this endless, useless beating of baffled
wings at these bars, doors, this cage?

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

(*After Gustave Fröding in the Swedish*)

The sea roars, the storm whistles,
Waves roll ashen gray;
"Man overboard, captain!"
Is that so?

"You can save his life yet, captain!"
The sea roars, the storm whistles.
"Throw a rope to him, you can reach him."
Is that so?

Waves roll ashen gray.
"He's gone down, you can't see him
any more, captain!"
Is that so?
The sea roars, the storm whistles.

USELESS WORDS

So long as we speak the same language and never understand each other,
So long as the spirals of our words snarl and interlock
And clutch each other with the irreckonable gutturals,
Well . . .

EARLY LYNCHING

Two Christs were at Golgotha.
One took the vinegar, another looked on.
One was on the cross, another in the mob.
One had the nails in his hands, another the stiff
fingers holding a hammer driving nails.
There were many more Christs at Golgotha, many more
thief pals, many many more in the mob howling the
Judean equivalent of, "Kill Him! kill Him!"
The Christ they killed, the Christ they didn't kill,
those were the two at Golgotha.

Pity, pity, the bones of these broken ankles.
Pity, pity, the slimp of these broken wrists
The mother's arms are strong to the last.
She holds him and counts the heart drips.

The smell of the slums was on him.
Wrongs of the slums lit his eyes.
Songs of the slums wove in his voice
The haters of the slums hated his slum heart.

The leaves of a mountain tree,
Leaves with a spinning star shook in them,
Rocks with a song of water, water, over them,
Hawks with an eye for death any time, any time,
The smell and the sway of these were on his sleeves,
were in his nostrils, his words.

The slum man they killed, the mountain man lives on.

PLUNGER

Empty the last drop.
Pour out the final clinging heartbeat.
Great losers look on and smile.
Great winners look on and smile.

Plunger:
Take a long breath and let yourself go.

RAIN WINDS

RAIN WINDS BLOW DOORS OPEN

Dreaming of grips at her heart
She asked in a sleep and between sleeps,
"What is mercy and why am I asking mercy?"

The doors in her dreams opened
And a rain wind blew in the doorway
And treetops moaned under footsteps over.

Dreaming of a road running off
Into the roads gone crossways on the sky,
She shook in a dream and cried between sleeps,
"How many miles, how many days, how many years?"

The strips of the sun
Spelled a name on the floor in the morning.
She tried to spell out the name, the letters.
"A rain wind blows in the doorway," she said,
"And a road goes crossways on the sky," she said,
"And the night lets nobody know how many miles,
how many days, how many years."

WIND HORSES

Roots, go deep: wrap your coils; fasten your knots:
Fix a loop far under, a four-in-hand far under:
The wind drives wild horses, gnashers, plungers:
    Go deep, roots.
Hold your four-in-hand knots against all wild horses.

RIVER MOON

The moon in the river, mother, is a red, red moon to-night.
I am going away on the wild, wild moon, the moon so red on the river to-night, mother.

A man with a wild dream on his tongue, a flying wild dream in his head and his heart,
A man is here with a runaway drum in his ribs, and shots of the sun in the runners of his blood.

I am going away on the red, wild runaway moon.
The moon on the river, mother, is red to-night.

The mist on the river is white and the moon on the mist is white.
I remember, mother, I remember he came when the moon was red, with a runaway drum in his ribs.
I remember, mother, the shots of the sun in the runners of his blood, the flying wild dream on his tongue.
To-night I remember, to-night with the mist on the river white and the moon on the mist white.

Something is gone—is it him that's gone or is it the red, wild runaway moon that's gone?

THEY MET YOUNG

1

"I could cry for roses, thinking of you,
Thinking of your lips, so like roses,
Thinking of the meetings of lips
And the crying of eyes meeting."

"I could love you in shadows, drinking
Of you, drinking till a morning sun.
I could touch the young heart of you
And learn all your red songs."

"I could answer the metronomes of blood,
The timebeats of your sweet kisses.
I could sing a star song or a sun song
In the crying of eyes meeting."

2

"Give me your lips.
Let Egypt come or Egypt go.
Open a window of stars.
Let a bag of shooting stars fall.
Wind us with a winding silk.
Pick us a slouching, foolish moon.
Take us to a silver blue morning.
It is too much—let your lips go.

The hammers call, the laws of the
hammers knock on gongs, beat and
beat on gongs.
It is too much—give me your lips
—let your lips go."

YELLOW EVENING STAR

The flush pink runner of the sun
Ran out with a ribbon leap
In the line of a yellow evening star.

Was there a murmur?
"Whither thou goest thither will I go?"
Was there a run and a jump—
Then old sea cliffs, clean high bastions?

FACE

I would beat out your face in brass.
The side of your head I would beat out in brass.
The nose, the mouth, the hang of the hair thick over
your head, the cool straight-looking forehead,
I would take a hammer and a sheet of brass and beat
them out till your face would be set against rain,
frost, storm, sea-water and sea-salt, against hoofs,
wheels, nails, against tidewater, rust, verdigris.
I would set your face at a blue crossways of sea beaches,
a dream of blue and brass.

HEAD

Here is a head with a blur of horizons.
She sits where a sweep of leaves is on.
When the wind swept in the spring leaves,
When the wind swept out the autumn leaves,
She sat here with her head a blur of horizons.
She sat here and a worker in brass asked her.
And no answer came and the winds swept on
And the leaves swept on and her head took form
Against the blur of horizons.

EXPLANATIONS OF LOVE

There is a place where love begins and a place
where love ends.

There is a touch of two hands that foils all
dictionaries.

There is a look of eyes fierce as a big Bethlehem open hearth
furnace or a little green-fire acetylene torch.

There are single careless bywords portentous as a
big bend in the Mississippi River.

Hands, eyes, bywords—out of these love makes
battlegrounds and workshops.

There is a pair of shoes love wears and the coming
is a mystery.

There is a warning love sends and the cost of it
is never written till long afterward.

There are explanations of love in all languages
and not one found wiser than this:

There is a place where love begins and a place
where love ends—and love asks nothing.

SEVEN ELEVEN

Among the grackles in a half circle on the grass
Two walked side by side on two legs apiece.

Treetops bent in the wind and bird nests shuddered.
This was why and only why the grackles sat in a half circle.

Seven grackles came at first and sat in the half circle.
Then there were eleven came with two legs apiece and sat in.

They might have been crapshooters full of hope and hot
breaths.
They might have been believers in luck, come seven, come
eleven.

SPRAY

I wonder what they called
Across the beaten spray,
Across the night's forehead.

"The long kiss lasts," he told her.
"I'm crazy about you," she answered.

So they called
to the beaten spray,
to the night's forehead.

BROKEN HEARTED SOPRANO

When the soprano sang,
"Ask the stars, O beloved,"
There was a wind piling a cover,
Over the sky a cover of black.

And the soprano was feeling
With a left hand over her heart
Trying to feel the deep hurt places,
Trying to measure the tired depths.

There is a wind piles covers.
The sky knows that wind out of old times.
The stars know that wind out of old times.

. . .

Have you pointed a finger
And beckoned a loose hand
Up at one star and found no answer?

EPISTLE

Jesus loved the sunsets on Galilee.
Jesus loved the fishing boats forming silhouettes against the sunsets on Galilee.
Jesus loved the fishermen on the fishing boats forming silhouettes against the sunsets on Galilee.
When Jesus said: Good-by, good-by, I will come again: Jesus meant that good-by for the sunsets, the fishing boats, the fishermen, the silhouettes all and any against the sunsets on Galilee: the good-by and the promise meant all or nothing.

MONKEY OF STARS

There was a tree of stars sprang up on a vertical panel of the south.
And a monkey of stars climbed up and down in this tree of stars.
And a monkey picked stars and put them in his mouth, tall up in a tree of stars shining in a south sky panel.
I saw this and I saw what it meant and what it means was five, six, seven, that's all, five, six, seven.
Oh hoh, yah yah, loo loo, the meaning was five, six, seven, five, six, seven.

Panels of changing stars, sashes of vapor, silver tails of meteor streams, washes and rockets of fire—
It was only a dream, oh hoh, yah yah, loo loo, only a dream, five, six, seven, five, six, seven.

GREAT ROOMS

SEA CHEST

There was a woman loved a man
as the man loved the sea.
Her thoughts of him were the same
as his thoughts of the sea.
They made an old sea-chest for their belongings
together.

WE HAVE GONE THROUGH GREAT ROOMS TOGETHER

And when on the dark steel came the roads
Of a milky mist, and a spray of stars,
Bunches and squares and a spatter of stars,
We counted stars, one by one, a million and a million.
And we remembered those stars as fishermen remember fish,
As bees remember blossoms, as crops remember rains.
And these were rooms too; we can so reckon.
We can always say we have gone through great rooms together.

LOVE IN LABRADOR

One arch of the sky
Took on a spray of jewels.

The crystals gleamed on the windows
Weaving their wintrish alphabets
Of spears and ovals fixed in frost
Fastened to a glass design
With a word: This must be.

There are shooters of the moon far north.
There are dying eyes holding diadems.
There are deaths sweet as laughing waters.
There are gold heelprints on the fading
staircases of the stars.

SLEEP IMPRESSION

The dark blue wind of early autumn
ran on the early autumn sky
in the fields of yellow moon harvest.
I slept, I almost slept,
I said listening:
Trees you have leaves rustling like rain
When there is no rain.

BUG SPOTS

This bug carries spots on his back.
Last summer he carried these spots.
Now it is spring and he is back here again
With a domino design over his wings.
All winter he has been in a bedroom,
In a hole, in a hammock, hung up, stuck away,
Stashed while the snow blew over
The wind and the dripping icicles,
The tunnels of the frost.
Now he has errands again in a rotten stump.

UNDERSTANDINGS IN BLUE

The bird sat on a red handle
Counting five star flowers,
Five clover leafs.

The bird was a pigeon
Wearing a quiet understanding
Of how to wear blue.

There is pigeon blue
Picked out of baskets of big sky
When the springtime is blue.

This was the blue fadeout fire
Resting on the pigeon wings
In a quiet understanding.

The red handle, the star flowers,
The green clover leaves,
Wove into the weaves of blue.

The big sky stood back of it all
With a basket of springtime blue
And an understanding all alone.

MAYBE

Maybe he believes me, maybe not.
Maybe I can marry him, maybe not.
Maybe the wind on the prairie,
The wind on the sea, maybe,
Somebody somewhere, maybe, can tell.
I will lay my head on his shoulder
And when he asks me I will say yes,
Maybe.

LET THEM ASK YOUR PARDON

Child, what can those old men bring you?
If they can bring you a new handful
Absolutely warm and soft as summer rain,
Let them ask your pardon and do it soon.
Otherwise, why are they old?
Otherwise, why should they look at you
And carry assumptions in their old eyes
And speak such words as "ig-no-rance"
And "wisdom"—let them ask your pardon
Showing you how summer rain is an old pal
Of the wriggle of the angleworm,
The flip of the muskalonge,
And the step of the walking rain
Across the prairie. If the old men, child,
Tell you no stories about rockets,
Shooting stars, horses of high ranges,
Let them ask your pardon, excuse themselves,
And go away.

STRIPED CATS, OLD MEN AND PROUD STOCKINGS

1

Ride a black horse with tan feet.
Let him have splashes of white,
Peninsulas of milk white.
Tell him, "Giddap, paint horse."
Ride him then with a bridle in your left hand
and a hawk sitting on your right wrist.
Wear a yellow dress and an orange bandanna
tied over your forehead.
So should a proud woman ride a proud horse.
So should a woman ride to a horse show, a bird show,
To a public procession, to a secret wedding,
To a crying menagerie of proud striped cats.

2

The old men who sit cross-legged in Hindustan
Naming the wedding days, the hungry days, the work days,
Handling their whiskers softly where the cascades
Come down numbering the years and the facts—
The old men look better close to the earth, cross-legged,
Pegged near the dirt, the home of the roots,
The home of years, facts.

3

They have chosen stockings to cover their legs
By a feeling for choices fine as air.
The appeal of stripes came to this one,
And spots, diamonds, clocks, anchors, to others,
The feeling for these choices was airy, fine,
Born of the deliberation of childbirths,
Thrust out with decision on the ends of their tongues.
If a black horse wishes white sox
Or a white horse calls for tan footwear
Or an ankle covering of pigeon blue gray—
It is a balance born of deliberations, childbirths.

MOON HAMMOCK

When the moon was a hammock of gold,
And the gold of the moon hammock kept changing
Till there was a blood hammock of a moon—
And the slow slipping down of it in the west,
The idle easy slipping down of it
Left a bridge of stars
And marchers among the stars—
That was an evening, a calendar date,
A curve of lines in an almanac.
People said it was an hour in September or April.
The astronomers stood at the mirror angles
Putting down another movement of the moon
The same as so many other movements of the moon
Put down in the big books of the regular watchers
Of the moon. This is the way things go by.
The gold hammock of a moon changes to blood,
Slips down, leaves a bridge of stars, marchers, almanacs.

THIMBLE ISLANDS

The sky and the sea put on a show.
Every day they put on a show.
There are dawn dress rehearsals.
There are sweet monotonous evening monologues.
The acrobatic lights of sunsets dwindle and darken.
The stars step out one by one with a bimbo, bimbo.

The red ball of the sun hung a balloon in the west,
And there was half a balloon, then no balloon at all,
And ten stars marched out and ten thousand more,
And the fathoms of the sky far over met the fathoms
of the sea far under, among the thimble islands.

In the clear green water of dawn came a float of silver filaments, feelers circling a pink polyp's mouth;
The feelers ran out, opened and closed, opened and closed, hungry and searching, soft and incessant, floating the salt sea inlets sucking the green sea water as land roses suck the land air.

Frozen rock humps, smooth fire-rock humps—
Thimbles on the thumbs of the wives of prostrate sunken giants—
God only knows how many sleep in the slack of the seven seas.

There in those places
under the sun balloons,
and fathoms, filaments, feelers—

The wind and the rain
sew the years
stitching one year into another.

Heavy hammers and high blowouts
take their pay, fill their contracts—
And there are dawn dress rehearsals, sweet
monotonous evening monologues.

CLEFS

The little moon rode up a high corner.
The woman in a little room sat alone.
A violin the woman had sang for her.
The gut strings and the bow bent
A series of clefs climbing for memories.
"For remembering," she said, "A little moon
Up a high corner and climbing violin clefs."

THE GREAT PROUD WAGON WHEELS GO ON

The great proud wagon wheels
go on. Out of night and night's
nothings a steel shaft, a white
fire, a new star.

The great proud wagon wheels
go on. Out of night and night's
nothings a proud head, a skull
shape, a thing looking, a face
and eyes.

The great proud wagon wheels
go on. Night again and night's
nothings again and the star and
the skull and face gone.

I wait. I know. Look! The great
proud wagon wheels go on. Now
what? Now who? . . . coming . . .
out of night and night's nothings
. . . coming . . . you? . . . and you? . . .

TALL TIMBER

Night calls many witnesses
to supply evidence, to report honestly,
the meaning of dying, loving, being born.

Night has no better witnesses
than tall timber, rich in a moon, roaming in mist,
swearing a corroboration of relevant circumstances.

Call others to the court-houses of earth;
let them have counsel and all benefits of doubt;
let them report all they have seen and heard.

Then let Night come into court.
The tall timber testifies, the moon, the mist, testify.
Let us hear the oaths of these unimpeachable witnesses.

PROUD TORSOS

Just before the high time of autumn
Comes with the crush of its touch,
And the leaves fall, the leaves one by one,
The leaves by a full darkening sky fall,
The trees look proud, the horse chestnut
Stands with a gathered pride, the ivies
Are gathered around the stumps,
The ivies are woven thick with a green coat
Covering the stumps. Yes, the trees
Look proud now, it is the big time.
Have they not all had summer?
Didn't they all flimmer with faint
Lines of green in the spring,
A thin green mist as if it might
Be air or it might be new green leaves?
So, the first weeks of September are on
And each tree stands with a murmur,
"I stand here with a count of one more year,
One more number, one more ring in my torso."
Two weeks, five, six weeks, and the trees
Will be standing . . . stripped . . . gaunt . . .
The leaves gone . . . the coat of green gone . . .
And they will be proud but no longer
With the gathered pride of the days
In the high time.

TO KNOW SILENCE PERFECTLY

There is a music for lonely hearts nearly always.
If the music dies down there is a silence
Almost the same as the movement of music.
To know silence perfectly is to know music.

SKY PIECES

SKY PIECES

Proudly the fedoras march on the heads of the somewhat careless men.
Proudly the slouches march on the heads of the still more careless men.
Proudly the panamas perch on the noggins of dapper debonair men.
Comically somber the derbies gloom on the earnest solemn noodles.
And the sombrero, most proud, most careless, most dapper and debonair of all, somberly the sombrero marches on the heads of important men who know what they want.
Hats are sky-pieces; hats have a destiny; wish your hat slowly; your hat is you.

LOVABLE BABBLERS

What did that old philosopher say?
"The deadest deaths are the best."
For he was the same who said to a friend:
When you cry I cry, when you shake hands with
me and ease my luck telling me it's too
bad and the world's all wrong, it melts
something inside of me and I break down.
So there are babblers we love for what they are.

OOMBA

Oomba went along years
Lugging a head
On a pikestaff of human neck.
"It is mine," said Oomba,
"If it is not mine who does it
Belong to?" he asked,
Oomba putting a straight quiz
To Oomba himself.

"Here it is," he muttered,
"Here on my neck, here on
My pikestaff of human neck;
And what is it for and how did I get it
And why do I say it is mine
And because it is mine it belongs to me?"
So Oomba went on talking to Oomba
Asking the simplest, oldest questions
Of himself.

SEVENTEEN MONTHS

This girl child speaks five words.
No for no and no for yes, "no" for either
no or yes.
"Teewee" for wheat or oats or corn or barley
or any food taken with a spoon.
"Go way" as an edict to keep your distance
and let her determinations operate.

"Spoon" for spoon or cup or anything to be handled,
all instruments, tools, paraphernalia of utility
and convenience are SPOONS.
Mama is her only epithet and synonym for God and the
Government and the one force of majesty and in-
telligence obeying the call of pity, hunger, pain,
cold, dark—MAMA, MAMA, MAMA.

SARAH'S LETTER TO PETER

When Sarah wrote Peter how she slept
among silver leaf poplars, waking to see
a light wind moving the under-side of the leaves—

She told him how to the north and east
there came a bath of light, a slow flush,
and the larks shot out into the air,
curved up and sang to meet the rose-red dawn.

But it wasn't dawn.
Four dark hours crept on till dawn arrived.
And the larks crept back to their nests
And later met the dawn that came and stayed,
Met it only with silence, with sore, dumb hearts.

Does every love have a false dawn?

She wrote her lover:
Others are but the showers of April, whilst
thou art the seven seas.
Making a rendezvous and then not keeping it is wrong.
Do not be a false dawn; I want thee forever.

And this was one of the chapters.

DESTROYERS

Grandfather and grandfather's uncle stand looking at the harbor. "Look there," says grandfather, "and you see a torpedo boat. Next to it is a torpedo boat destroyer. And next to the torpedo boat destroyer is a destroyer of torpedo boat destroyers."

And grandfather's uncle says, "I heard my grandfather's uncle say every echo has a destroyer and for every echo destroyer there is a destroyer of echo destroyers."

And grandfather's uncle says, "I remember hearing my grandfather's uncle say every destroyer carries a pocket of eggs and the eggs wait and when they are ready they go blooey and the works of the destroyer blows up."

So they stand looking at the harbor, grandfather a grand old grey whiskered monochromic sea-dog and grandfather's uncle a grand old grey-whiskered monochromic landlubber.

"Columbus," says grandfather, "Columbus was only a little dago, a ginny, a wop, and he changed the shape of the earth; before Columbus came the shape of the earth in the heads of men was square and flat and he made it round and round in the heads of men."

"Yes," said grandfather's uncle, "He was bugs, he was loony, he saw things in a pig's eye, he had rats in his garret, bats in his belfry, there was a screw loose somewhere in

him, he had a kink and he was a crank, he was nuts and belonged in a booby hatch."

And the two grand old grey-whiskered monochromic men, one a sea-dog, the other a landlubber, laughed, laughed, laughed in each other's sea-green, land-grey eyes.

TWO WOMEN AND THEIR FATHERS

1

Her father was a policeman who went fishing summer Sundays and caught a carp once with an old Spanish coin in its belly. As for her she picks up a good living high in the air in pink tights on a trapeze working for Ringling's circus.

2

Her father wore hip rubber boots and stood in yellow clay digging a tunnel for street cars to dip under the Chicago river. As for her she goes by a Hawaiian name and is known for a dance wherein she takes off one garment after another till there is a semblance of no garments at all.

VERY VERY IMPORTANT

I have no doubt that it is very important and so are you.
Put in two more of the word 'very' as a prefix to the word 'important' if you like.
Make it read: I have no doubt it is very very very important and so are you.
Thus there are three of the word 'very' standing in a row as prefixes to 'importance.'
If you wish more of the word 'very' go to the same place these came from.

FOOLISH ABOUT WINDOWS

I was foolish about windows.
The house was an old one and the windows
were small.
I asked a carpenter to come and open the
walls and put in bigger windows.
"The bigger the window the more it costs,"
he said.
"The bigger the cheaper," I said.
So he tore off siding and plaster and laths
And put in a big window and bigger windows.
I was hungry for windows.

One neighbor said, "If you keep on you'll be
able to see everything there is."
I answered, "That'll be all right, that'll be
classy enough for me."
Another neighbor said, "Pretty soon your house
will be all windows."
And I said, "Who would the joke be on then?"
And still another, "Those who live in glass
houses gather no moss."
And I said, "Birds of a feather should not throw
stones and a soft answer turneth away rats."

LOVE LETTER TO HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

The kitchen chair speaks to the bread knife,
"Why have you no legs?"
The bread knife answers, "And you no teeth?"
It was a quarrel on a summer day.
It ran on till winter
And on to another winter and another.
In the cellar ultimately
The kitchen chair said,
"Your teeth are gone,"
And the bread knife,
"I see you have no legs."
It was quiet in the cellar, they found,
No yammering of people, no soup nor nuts,
A pile of coal, old mops, and broken tools,
These they could talk with . . . and mostly
None of them talked at all.

MYSTERIOUS BIOGRAPHY

Christofo Colombo was a hungry man,
hunted himself half way round the world;
he began poor, panhandled, ended in jail,
Christofo so hungry, Christofo so poor,
Christofo in the chilly, steel bracelets,
honorable distinguished Christofo Colombo.

RAT RIDDLES

There was a gray rat looked at me
with green eyes out of a rathole.

"Hello, rat," I said,
"Is there any chance for me
to get on to the language of the rats?"

And the green eyes blinked at me,
blinked from a gray rat's rathole.

"Come again," I said,
"Slip me a couple of riddles;
there must be riddles among the rats."

And the green eyes blinked at me
and a whisper came from the gray rathole:
"Who do you think you are and why is a rat?
Where did you sleep last night and why do
you sneeze on Tuesdays? And why is the
grave of a rat no deeper than the grave
of a man?"

And the tail of a green-eyed rat
Whipped and was gone at a gray rathole.

WINTER WEATHER

It is cold.
The bitter of the winter
whines a story.
It is the colder weather when the truck
drivers sing it would freeze the whiskers
off a brass monkey.
It is the bitterest whining of the winter
now.

Well, we might sit down now, have a cup of coffee
apiece, and talk about the weather.
We might look back on things that happened long
ago, times when the weather was different.
Or we might talk about things ahead of us, funny
things in the days, days, days to come, days when
the weather will be different again.

Yes, a cup of coffee apiece.
Even if this winter weather is bitter,
The truck drivers are laughing:
It would freeze the whiskers off a brass monkey.

THE DINOSAUR BONES

The dinosaur bones are dusted every day.
The cards tell how old we guess the dinosaur
bones are.
Here a head was seven feet long, horns with a
hell of a ram,
Humping the humps of the Montana mountains.
The respectable school children
Chatter at the heels of their teacher who ex-
plains.
The tourists and wonder hunters come with
their parasols
And catalogues and arrangements to do the
museum
In an hour or two hours.
The dinosaur bones
are dusted
every day.

UNINTENTIONAL PAINT

The flat gray banana store front
is visited by a union painter with no intentions
and a bucket of high maroon paint
and a pot of high yellow.

The high maroon banana store front
sings its contralto with two stripes
of yellow soprano on the door.

The union painter meant nothing
and we can not attribute intentions
to a bucket of maroon nor a pot of yellow.

The door and the lintels sing.
Two banjos strum on the threshold.
Two people hum a snatch of song
They know well from singing together often.
I must come this way often
and not only for bananas.

PEOPLE OF THE EAVES, I WISH YOU GOOD MORNING

The wrens have troubles like us. The house of a wren will not run itself any more than the house of a man.

They chatter the same as two people in a flat where the laundry came back with the shirts of another man and the shimmy of another woman.

The shirt of a man wren and the shimmy of a woman wren are a trouble in the wren house. It is this or something else back of this chatter a spring morning.

Trouble goes so quick in the wren house. Now they are hopping wren jigs beaten off in a high wren staccato time.

People of the eaves, I wish you good-morning, I wish you a thousand thanks.

WEDDING POSTPONED

The arrangements are changed.
We were going to marry at six o'clock.
Now we shall not marry at all.

The bridegroom was all ready.
And the best man of the bridegroom was ready.

The bride fixed out in orchids and a long veil,
The bride and six bridesmaids were all ready.

Then the arrangements changed.
The date was changed not from six o'clock till later.
The date was changed to no time at all, to never.

Why the arrangements were changed is a long story.
Tell half of it and it is better than nothing at all.
Tell it with a hint and a whisper and it is told wrong.

We know why it was put off,
Why the arrangements shifted,
Why the organist was told to go,
Why the minister ready for the ring ceremony
Was told to drive away and be quick about it, please.
We know this in all its results and circumstances.

The disappointment of the best man,
The sorry look on the faces of the bridesmaids,
We, who chose them out of many, we could understand.

And we told them only what is told here:
The arrangements are changed, there will be no wedding,
We shall not marry at all, not to-day, not to-morrow, no
time.

TWO WOMEN

They told me in an old book
about the wine-dark sea.

I saw the sea foam-lit and
green, sunset-red and changing.

I saw the sea wine-dark only
when I thought of you and your eyes.

. . .

The fabrics shift in her eyes.
Persian cat fur is soft,
A Navajo blanket beautifully woven,
And is there anything more restful
than a Japanese sea-mist silk?
The fabrics shift in her voice.

SNATCH OF SLIPHORN JAZZ

Are you happy? It's the only
way to be, kid.
Yes, be happy, it's a good nice
way to be.
But not happy-happy, kid, don't
be too doubled-up doggone happy.
It's the doubled-up doggone happy-
happy people . . . bust hard . . . they
do bust hard . . . when they bust.
Be happy, kid, go to it, but not too
doggone happy.

LANDSCAPE

On a mountain-side the real estate agents
Put up signs marking the city lots to be sold there.
A man whose father and mother were Irish
Ran a goat farm half-way down the mountain;
He drove a covered wagon years ago,
Understood how to handle a rifle,
Shot grouse, buffalo, Indians, in a single year,
And now was raising goats around a shanty.
Down at the foot of the mountain
Two Japanese families had flower farms.
A man and woman were in rows of sweet peas
Picking the pink and white flowers
To put in baskets and take to the Los Angeles market.
They were clean as what they handled
There in morning sun, the big people and baby-faces.
Across the road high on another mountain
Stood a house saying, "I am it," a commanding house.
There was the home of a motion picture director
Famous for lavish doll house interiors,
Clothes ransacked from the latest designs for women
In the combats of "male against female."
The mountain, the scenery, the layout of the landscape,
And the peace of the morning sun as it happened,
The miles of houses pocketed in the valley beyond—
It was all worth looking at, worth wondering about,
How long it might last, how young it might be.

Hollywood, 1923.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF GOOD-BY

Good-by is a loose word, a yellow ribbon
fluttering in the wind.
Good-by is a stiff word, a steel slide rule—
a fixed automatic phone number.
A thousand people? And you must say good-by
to all? One at a time?—yes, I guess you
need a thousand different good-bys.
There is a good-by for the Johnsons and another
for the Smiths and another for the Poindexters
and the Van Rensselaers.
And there is the big grand good-by to the thousand
all at once, the whole works.

THREE HILLS LOOK DIFFERENT IN THE MOONSHINE

The hill of the white skull in the summer moon shines; the hill of the red heart is a neighbor in the summer moonshine; the hill of the climbing clumsy shadows is another.

PROUD OF THEIR RAGS

They come down from the mountains, proud of their rags.
"What do you know about loons, panthers, hawks?
Wings, winds, slides—what do you know?
Hunger and hope, and how do you know who tore my rags?"
They come down from the mountains, proud of their rags,
five or six out of sixty; they come down with proud
heads.

BROKEN SKY

The sky of gray is eaten in six places,
Rag holes stand out.
It is an army blanket and the sleeper
slept too near the fire.

HELLS AND HEAVENS

Each man pictures his hell or heaven different.
Some have snug home-like heavens, suburban, well-kept.
Some have a wild, storm-swept heaven; their happiness has been in storms, heaven must have storms mixed with fair weather.
And hell for some is a jail, for others a factory, for others a kitchen, for others a place of many polite liars full of blah, all gah gah.

THREE FRAGMENTS FOR FISHERS OF DESTINY

Methusaleh was a witness to many cabbages and kings.
They marched in procession for him like the marching
harvests of onions lift their green spears in Maytime
and go down the wind in thistledown fluff with the
leaves of October.

The same wind blew its crescendo and diminuendo in the
long beards of clear-eyed prophets and again in the
whiskers of the muddleheads who only called them-
selves prophets.

Methusaleh saw the old muddleheads sniff at the sun
And proclaim their wisdom as beyond the sun.

TIMBER MOON

TIMBER MOON

There is a way the moon looks into the timber at night
And tells the walnut trees secrets of silver sand—
There is a way the moon makes a lattice work
Under the leaves of the hazel bushes—
There is a way the moon understands the hoot owl
Sitting on an arm of a sugar maple throwing its
One long lonesome cry up the ladders of the moon—
There is a way the moon finds company early in the fall
time.

FLOWERS TELL MONTHS

Gold buttons in the garden today—
Among the brown-eyed susans the golden spiders are
gambling
The blue sisters of the white asters speak to each other.

After the travel of the snows—
Buttercups come in a yellow rain,
Johnny-jump-ups in a blue mist—
Wild azaleas with a low spring cry.

LANDSCAPE

See the trees lean to the wind's way of learning.
See the dirt of the hills shape to the water's
way of learning.
See the lift of it all go the way the biggest
wind and the strongest water want it.

COUNTING

Sweet lips, there are songs about kisses now.
Looking backward are kisses of remembrance
Looking ahead are kisses to be wished-for.
So time is counted, so far back, so far ahead, in
measurements of sweet kisses.

OAK ARMS

The broken arm of the black oak
blisters in the list of numbers:
"The sky hissed; I stand and remember."

And the gold of the gloaming flushes, floods by,
And the haze gold is cut across with the cricket's
wisp of silver.

MOON-PATH

Creep up, moon, on the south sky.
Mark the moon path of this evening.
The day must be counted.
The new moon is a law.
The little say-so of the moon must be listened to.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT GARDENS

Flowers can be cousins of the stars.
The closing and speaking lips of the lily
And the warning of the fire and the dust—
They are in the gardens and the sky of stars.
Beyond the shots of the light of this sun
Are the little sprinkles, the little twinklers
Of suns to whose lips this lily never sent
A whisper from its closing and speaking lips.

WINDFLOWER LEAF

This flower is repeated
out of old winds, out of
old times.

The wind repeats these, it
must have these, over and
over again.

New windflowers so fresh,
oh beautiful leaves, here
now again.

The domes over
fall to pieces.
The stones under
fall to pieces.
Rain and ice
wreck the works.
The wind keeps, the windflowers
keep, the leaves last,
The wind young and strong lets
these last longer than stones.

LITTLE SKETCH

There are forked branches of trees
Where the leaves shudder obediently,
Where the hangover leaves
Flow in a curve downward;
And between the forks and leaves,
In patches and angles, in square handfuls,
The orange lights of the done sunset
Come and filter and pour.

BUTTER COLORS

The light of the yellow flowers
leaps to the light of the pool.

Butter under the chin of this slip
slides to the level water mirror.

Fan yellow films of light play fast
slipping all day on, on, to the water home.

Home, come home, water calls to light.
Fan yellow films leap and slide.

WEBS

Every man spins a web of light circles
And hangs this web in the sky
Or finds it hanging, already hung for him,
Written as a path for him to travel.
The white spiders know how this geography goes.
Their feet tell them when to spin,
How to weave in a criss-cross
Among elms and maples, among radishes and button weeds,
Among cellar timbers and old shanty doors.
Not only the white spiders, also the yellow and blue,
Also the black and purple spiders
Listen when their feet tell them to spin one.
And while every spider spins a web of light circles
Or finds one already hung for him,
So does every man born under the sky.

PEACE, NIGHT, SLEEP

"You shall have peace with night and sleep.
It was written in the creep of the mist,
In the open doors of night horizons.
Peace, night, sleep, all go together.
In the forgetting of the frogs and the sun,
In the losing of the grackle's off cry
And the call of the bird whose name is gone—
You shall have peace; the mist creeps, the doors open.
Let night, let sleep, have their way."

BUNDLES

I have thought of beaches, fields,
Tears, laughter.

I have thought of homes put up—
And blown away.

I have thought of meetings and for
Every meeting a good-by.

I have thought of stars going alone,
Orioles in pairs, sunsets in blundering
Wistful deaths.

I have wanted to let go and cross over
To a next star, a last star.

I have asked to be left a few tears
And some laughter.

MAN AND DOG ON AN EARLY WINTER MORNING

There was a tall slough grass
Too tough for the farmers to feed the cattle,
And the wind was sifting through, shaking the grass;
Each spear of grass interfered a little with the wind
And the interference sent up a soft hiss,
A mysterious little fiddler's and whistler's hiss;
And it happened all the spears together
Made a soft music in the slough grass
Too tough for the farmers to cut for fodder.
"This is a proud place to come to
On a winter morning, early in winter,"
Said a hungry man, speaking to his dog,
Speaking to himself and the passing wind,
"This is a proud place to come to."

PRECIOUS MOMENTS

Bright vocabularies are transient as rainbows.
Speech requires blood and air to make it.
Before the word comes off the end of the tongue,
While the diaphragms of flesh negotiate the word,
In the moment of doom when the word forms
It is born, alive, registering an imprint—
Afterward it is a mummy, a dry fact, done and gone.
The warning holds yet: Speak now or forever hold
your peace.
Ecce homo had meanings: Behold the Man! Look at
him! Dying he lives and speaks!

OCTOBER PAINT

Flame blue wisps in the west,
Wrap yourselves in these leaves
And speak to winter about us.
Tell winter the whole story.

Red leaves up the oaken slabs,
You came, little and green spats
Four months ago; your climbers
Put scroll after scroll around
The oaken slabs. "Red, come red,"
Some one with an October paint
Pot said. And here you are,
Fifty red arrowheads of leaf paint
Or fifty mystic fox footprints
Or fifty pointed thumbprints.
Hold on, the winds are to come
Blowing, blowing, the gray slabs
Will lose you, the winds will
Flick you away in a whiff
One by one, two by two . . . Yet
I have heard a rumor whispered;
Tattlers tell it to each other
Like a secret everybody knows . . .
Next year you will come again.
Up the oaken slabs you will put
Your pointed fox footprints
Green in the early summer
And you will be red arrowheads

In the falltime . . . Tattlers
Slip this into each others' ears
Like a secret everybody knows.
. . . If I see some one with an
October paint pot I shall be
Full of respect and say,
"I saw your thumbprints everywhere;
How do you do it?"

MANY HATS

1

When the scrapers of the
deep winds were done, and
the haulers of the tall
waters had finished, this
was the accomplishment.

The drums of the sun never
get tired, and first off
every morning, the drums of
the sun perform an intro-
duction of the dawn here.

The moon goes down here
as a dark bellringer doing
once more what he has done
over and over already in
his young life.

Up on a long blue platform
comes a line of starprints.

If the wind has a song, it
is moaning; Good Lawd, I
done done what you told me
to do.

2

Whose three-ring circus is this? Who stipulated in a contract for this to be drunken, death-defying, colossal, mammoth, cyclopean, mystic as the light that never was on land or sea, bland, composed, and imperturbable as a cool phalanx of sphinxes? Why did one woman cry, The silence is terrible? Why did another smile, There is a sweet gravity here? Why do they come and go here and look as in a looking glass?

The Grand Canyon of Arizona, said one, this is it, hacked out by the broadax of a big left-handed God and left forgotten, fixed over and embellished by a remembering right-handed God who always comes back.

If you ask me, said an old railroader, I'll never tell you who took the excavation contract for this blowout—it took a lot of shovels and a lot of dynamite—several large kegs, I would guess—and maybe they had a case or two of T N T.

Yes, he went on, the Grand Canyon, the daddy of 'em all—the undisputed champeen—that range rider sure was righto—the elements had a hell of a rassle here.

The Grand Canyon—a long ride from where Brigham Young stands in bronze gazing on the city he bade rise out of salt and alkali—a weary walk from Santa Fe and the Mountains of the Blood of Christ—a bitter hike from where the Sonora dove at Tucson mourns, No hope, no hope—a sweet distance from where Balboa stripped for his

first swim in the Pacific—a mean cross-country journey to where Roy Bean told the muchacho, By the white light of a moon on the walls of an arroyo last Tuesday you killed a woman and next Tuesday we're going to hang you—a traveler's route of many days and sleeps to reach the place of the declaration, God reigns and the government at Washington lives.

Shovel into this cut of earth all past and present possessions, creations, belongings of man; shovel furioso, appasionata, pizzicata; shovel cities, wagons, ships, tools, jewels; the bottom isn't covered; the wild burros and the trail mules go hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw.

Turn it into a Hall of Fame, said a rambler, let it be a series of memorials to the Four Horsemen, to Napoleon, Carl the Twelfth, Caesar, Alexander the Great, Hannibal and Hasdrubal, and all who have rode in blood up to the bridles of the horses, calling, Hurrah for the next who goes—let each have his name on a truncated cyclops of rock—let passers-by say, He was pretty good but he didn't last long.

Now I wonder, I wonder, said another, can they all find room here? Elijah fed by the ravens, Jonah in the belly of the whale, Daniel in the lion's den, Lot's wife transmogrified into salt, Elijah riding up into the sky in a chariot of fire—can they all find room? Are the broken pieces of the Tower of Babel and the Walls of Jericho here? Should I look for the ram's horn Joshua blew?

3

A phantom runner runs on the rim. "I saw a moon man throw hats in, hats of kings, emperors, senators, presidents, plumed hats of knights, red hats of cardinals, five gallon hats of cowboys, tasselled hats of Bavarian yodelers, mandarin hats, derbies, fedoras, chapeaus, straws, lady picture hats out of Gainsborough portraits—

"Hats many proud people handed over, dying and saying, Take this one too—hats furioso, appasionata, pizzicata—hats for remembrance, good-by, three strikes and out, fade me, there's no place to go but home—hats for man alone, God alone, the sky alone."

4

Think of the little birds, said another, the wee birdies—before God took a hunk of mud and made Man they were here, the birds, the robins, nuncos, nuthatches, bats, eagles, cedar birds, chickadees, bluejays, I saw a blackbird gleaming in satin, floating in the scrolls of his glamorous wings, stopping on an airpath and standing still with nothing under his feet, looking at the gray Mojave desert level interrupted by the Grand Canyon—the birds belong, don't they?

5

Comes along a hombre saying, Let it be dedicated to Time; this is what is left of the Big Procession when Time gets

through with it; the sun loves its stubs; we will give a name to any torso broken and tumbled by Time; we will leave the vanished torsos with no names.

Comes along a hombre accidentally remarking, Let it be dedicated to Law and Order—the law of the Strong fighting the Strong, the Cunning outwitting the Less Cunning—and the Weak Ones ordered to their places by the Strong and Cunning—aye—and ai-ee—Law and Order.

Comes along another hombre giving his slant at it, Now this sure was the Gyarden of Eden, smooth, rich, nice, watered, fixed, no work till to-morrow, Adam and Eve satisfied and sitting pretty till the day of the Snake Dance and the First Sin; and God was disgusted and wrecked the works; he ordered club-foot angels with broken wings to shoot the job; now look at it.

Comes another hombre all wised up, This was the Devil's Brickyard; here were the kilns to make the Kitchens of Hell; after bricks enough were made to last Hell a million years, the Devil said, "Shut 'er down"; they had a big pay-day night and left it busted from hell to breakfast; the Hopis looked it over and decided to live eighty miles away where there was water; then came Powell, Hance, the Santa Fe, the boys shooting the rapids, and Fred Harvey with El Tovar.

6

Now Hance had his points; they asked him how he come to find the Canyon and he told 'em, I was ridin' old Whitey

and the Mojaves after me when we comes to this gap miles across; I told Whitey, It's you now for the longest jump you ever took; Whitey jumped and was half way across when I pulled on the bridle, turned him around, and we come back to the same place on the Canyon rim we started from.

Yes, Hance told 'em, if they asked, how he come to dig the Canyon. "But where did you put all the dirt?" "Took it away in wheelbarrows and made San Francisco Peaks."

Hance sleeping near a big rock, woke up and saw seven rattlesnakes circle seven times around the rock, each with the tail of the snake ahead in his mouth, and all of them swallowing, till after a while there wasn't a snake left. Hance's wife got her leg caught between two rocks; couldn't get her loose, said Hance, so I had to shoot her to save her from starving to death; look down there between those two rocks and you can see her bones, said Hance.

This is where we find the original knuckle snake; he breaks to pieces if you try to pick him up; and when you go away he knuckles himself together again; yes, and down here, is the original echo canyon; we holler, "Has Smith been here?" and the echo promulgates back, "Which Smith?"

7

Down at the darkest depths, miles down, the Colorado River grinds, toils, driving the channel deeper—is it free or convict?—tell me—will it end like a great writer crying, I die with my best books unwritten?

Smooth as glass run the streaming waters—then a break into rapids, into tumblers, into spray, into voices, roars, growls, into commanding monotones that hunt far corners and jumping-off places.

And how should a beautiful, ignorant stream of water know it heads for an early release—out across the desert, running toward the Gulf, below sea level, to murmur its lullaby, and see the Imperial Valley rise out of burning sand with cotton blossoms, wheat, watermelons, roses, how should it know?

8

The hombres keep coming; here comes another; he says, says he, I met four people this morning, the poker face, the baby stare, the icy mitt, and the peace that passeth understanding—let this place be dedicated to X, the unknown factor, to the Missing Link, to Jo Jo the dog-faced boy, to the Sargossa Sea, to Humpty Dumpty, to Little Red Riding Hood crying for her mother, to those who never believe in Santa Klaus, to the man who turned himself inside out because he was so sleepy.

9

Steps on steps lift on into the sky; the lengths count up into stairways; let me go up for the Redeemer is up there; He died for me; so a Spanish Indian was speaking—and he asked, When the first French Jesuit looked from Yavapai four hundred years ago, did he murmur of a tall altar to go

on a mile-long rock shelf down there on a mesa? did he whisper of an unspeakably tall altar there for the raising of the ostensorium and the swinging of censers and the calling up of the presence of the Heart of the Living Christ? And he went on, Where the Son of God is made known surely is a place for the removal of shoes and the renewal of feet for the journey—surely this is so.

10

Came a lean, hungry-looking hombre with Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas on his wind-bitten face, and he was saying, Sure my boy, sure my girl, and you're free to have any sweet bluebird fancies you please, any wild broncho thoughts you choose to have, when you stand before this grand scrap pile of hats, hammers, haciendas, and hidalgos. He went on, Yes, let this be dedicated to Time and Ice; a memorial of the Human Family which came, was, and went; let it stand as a witness of the short miserable pilgrimage of mankind, of flame faiths, of blood and fire, and of Ice which was here first and will be here again—Faces once frozen you shall all be frozen again—the little clocks of Man shall all be frozen and nobody will be too late or too early ever again.

11

On the rim a quizzical grey-glinting hombre was telling himself how it looked to him—the sun and the air are endless with silver tricks—the light of the sun has crimson stratagems—the changes go on in stop-watch split seconds —the blues slide down a box of yellow and mix with reds

that melt into grey and come back saffron clay and granite pink—a weaving gamble of color twists on and it is anybody's guess what is next.

A long sand-brown shawl shortens to a glimmering turquoise scarf—as the parapets and chimneys wash over and out in the baths of the sunset and the floats of the gloaming, one man says, There goes God with an army of banners, and another man, Who is God and why? who am I and why?

He told himself, This may be
something else than what I
see when I look—how do I
know? For each man sees him-
self in the Grand Canyon—
each one makes his own Canyon
before he comes, each one brings
and carries away his own Canyon-
who knows? and how do I know?

12

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is moaning: Good Lawd, I
done done what you told me
to do.

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